Fascism And British India

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Dedicated to

My Dear Friends
Tariq and Muniz Zamir

Contents

Foreword 7

Chapter I – India in the first half of 20th century 17

Chapter II – Mussolini and Tagore 35

Chapter III – Iqbal's visit to Italy 57

Chapter IV – Gandhi's visit to Italy 75

Chapter V – The role of the IPO and the IsMEO 89

Chapter VI – The support of Mussolini to India 101

Chapter VII – The years of the war: 1940-1945 115

Chapter VIII – The role of Fascist diplomacy in the creation of Pakistan 139

Appendices 149

Bibliography 179

Index 183

FOREWORD

According to a logical but disarming axiom Mussolini intended to open the road to an Italian policy in India or much better to his personal policy to British India. His axiom seemed simple: India and Italy are anti-British, hence India and Italy have many common points of view. This was the heart of the matter, even if the development of such a policy was not so simple.

Actually – as we shall see later on – there was not any clear policy of Fascist Italy towards British India. It was always an improvised policy which was governed not according to a programme but by situations or events, and quite often by the availability of men, sometimes ready to co-operate, sometimes reserved or against it, in the middle of personal or political interests, or even utopian projects.

Besides there was not any uniformity of attitudes to British India in the same people responsible of the Italian foreign affairs, such as Mussolini, Ciano,[1] Grandi,[2] and their close officers, who were all influenced by their personal political ideas and by their personal attitudes towards Britain before the Second World War and towards Germany from 1940 on.

Mussolini's interest for India and her politics goes back to 1921 when he wrote a general article about the rebellion of the Muslim Moplahs of Malabar. The episode was the occasion to speak of the revolts that had been taking in India for years. A passage is worthwhile quoting:

[...] It is clear that the position of Great Britain in India is rather difficult. We do not think of a forthcoming collapse of her domination because she will use all her means, violent and underhand, to maintain India; however, the agitation in India has started and is going to be successful. The seed has been sown, the people are ready; India's independence is not a matter of possibility, it is a problem of time. From the shores of the Atlantic to the sea of Bengal, from Morocco to Malabar the whole Arab-Muslim world is in agitation. It is a great event: this awakening of peoples and tribes, which seemed sleepy in a fatalistic resignation, while are today ready in arms, ready to any war.[3]

In the years after the "March on Rome" Mussolini was attracted by Gandhi in particular. Even though Gandhi was considered a controversial figure, he was very well known in Europe more because of his strange way of life than of his ideas, which were however too vague. How was it possible to shake off the British domination with non-violence? Mussolini's brother himself, Arnaldo, wrote in 1925 that Gandhi's passive resistance was actually a kind of "resignation" waiting for better times.[4] Later on, he modified his opinion by saying that Gandhi was the prophet of some hundred million Indians subjugated by the British "with the force of laws and arms" and by him "pushed to autonomy".[5]

However, the most exhaustive description of the Indian situation was by Mario Appelius, a pro-fascist regime journalist, who went to India in 1925 for a reportage under the sponsorship of the government. In his book, dedicated to Mussolini from "the land of Gandhi,"[6] the Indian revolution was seen as a revolt against the western civilization and the national movement was identified with the Mahatma. Appelius, who had interviewed Gandhi, wrote that under his leadership India had become the basis of a revolutionary movement for all the peoples of Asia. His conclusion was that Lenin, Mussolini and Gandhi were three exceptional men in modern history though each of them proposed his own particular way: Lenin the extolling of masses, Mussolini the doctrine of the Country, Gandhi the immobility and the non-violence. There was, however, a contrasting element:

> Gandhi's struggle was based on non-violent means to attain a self-government [*swadesh*], while Mussolini's territorial expansion on arms and eventually wars.

The problems of India and in general the revolts of the Asiatic peoples became relevant in the Italian press in the years 1930-31. The first event was the declaration of independence approved by the Indian National Congress at Lahore on 1st December 1929. On the occasion another Italian pro-regime journalist, Virginio Gayda, a sort of official spokesman, wrote that the peoples of the East were ready to shake off the British yoke and paid a tribute to Gandhi's action.[7] In 1930-31 tens of articles dealing directly or indirectly with India were published in two magazines connected with the Fascist government: "Gerarchia" and "La Vita Italiana".[8]

Mussolini's first idea to govern India after the victory of the Axis powers and the collapse of the British empire in India goes back to a sentence he had read in a book and had marked with three exclamations marks:

> India is the strong-room of the world. Italy must have it. What the British say is of no importance. The fascist comrades will silence them ...[9]

This book goes back to 1931. But when did Mussolini read this passage? Maybe in the same year the book was published. We think so on the basis of another book which was present in his personal library, an essay written by Viator under the title *L'India dove va?* [Where does India go] and published by the government Libreria del Littorio in Rome. The pseudonym of Viator was used by Gino Scarpa,[10] who had spent many years in India and was a personal friend of Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai.[11]

The unsigned, short introduction to *L'India dove va?*, attributed to a high officer of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described the atmosphere of that period:

> What does it happen in India? The news recently published in European newspapers is very interesting but confused. There has been a meeting of the Indian Congress where a full independence of India from the British Empire has been asked and at the same time another meeting was held where a possibility and a usefulness of a compromise between rulers and ruled people have been supported. The leader of the Congress was Gandhi, one of the world personalities of our epoch. Europe asks: what does it happen in India? What is the real situation? What are the possible developments of the situation in the near future? No doubt on the fact that it has moved away from the cast immobility to the western dynamism. But what will this movement take to? The author of this book gives a clear answer to all this. He is a connoisseur of men and things. His words are based on a direct witness and are going to explain all this to the Fascists, that is to explain a problem that concerns three hundred and twenty million people. The future of the British empire and most of the future story of the world depend on the solution of that problem.

he last passage of the introduction reflected the attitude of the Italian government towards Britain:

> Some people say: even if Britain makes mistakes, we must support her because if Britain collapses, Europe's prestige collapses too.

It is right to say that Britain is responsible for the policy the peoples of Asia are going to undertake towards Europe. But this does not mean that Europe must follow Britain if her policy is wrong and if she creates separations and conflicts instead of searching for a compromise and establishing a co-operation. On the contrary, Europe has the duty of making Britain feel the responsibility of her position, a responsibility which goes beyond her particular material interests.

The idea of the Empire itself is not a conception of Europe or a defence of Europe; it is a corner-stone of

Britain independently from Europe and eventually against Europe.

Being between the world development of the USA and the great economical unities of Europe, Britain reinforces the organization of her Empire to go on with her isolation in order not to be compelled to join continental Europe.

India is an essential element of this scheme. This makes the granting of autonomy difficult for Britain because the Empire is not a system where India is interested to remain like other countries. It is an organization destined to serve first of all the interests of London, then the interests of other white dominions who are linked to London by interests of race or of defence. The time when India has the possibility to develop her economy in an autonomous manner, her interests would coincide with this system only occasionally and the system itself would therefore become a burden and a limitation.[12]

We must underline the fact that these ideas were expressed in a period when fascist Italy was still thinking of a possible agreement with Britain. The conclusion was, however, that Rome was in a position of mediating and would be the speaker of the international platform:

> If India becomes self-governing or independent, the first consequence will be the involvement of Egypt, Palestine, Iraq. The eastern Mediterranean will play the historical role it had in the past. Rome will be the place where East and West shall meet again.[13]

All the more or less official contacts of the Italian government with representatives of the intelligentsia of India were made from the above mentioned point of view, of course Gandhi being on the foreground.

However, under the support of Indian nationalism, Mussolini cherished a dream: to make Italy a great power by expanding it to south (Africa) and to east (Asia). He had

made it clear at the second five-year assembly of the regime on 19th March 1931.[14] Later on, Africa was the object of a military conquest (Ethiopia), which created a crisis in the Mediterranean area and a dissension with Britain; India became apparently only the object of an economic expansion.

We have said apparently because we now know that Mussolini, without informing anybody, had planned since 1935 a surprise attack (similar to the later Japanese attack to Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941) by the Italian Navy against the British naval bases of Malta and Suez and against the French naval bases of Biserta and Toulon, extending it to Aden in order to reach the Indian Ocean. On 2nd September 1938, at the eve of the meeting of Munich of 28th September when Chamberlain announced "peace in our time", the plans for the simultaneous attacks were ready. On 10th September the head of the Italian Navy, admiral Domenico Cavagnari, sent them to his officers with a recommendation: "Be ready. The orders come from above".[15]

We must not forget that in the same period the fascist government, after the Ethiopian crisis, had tried to come to terms with the British. On 2nd January 1937 the two governments signed a Gentlemen's Agreement about the freedom of the Mediterranean:

> [They] recognize that the freedom of entry into, exit from and transit through the Mediterranean is a vital interest both to the different parts of the British Empire and to Italy, and these interests are in no way inconsistent with each other.

And on 16th April 1938 there followed an Anglo-Italian Agreement concerning good neighbour relations in East Africa, the evacuation of Spain and the Naval Treaty of London. Of course, these agreements were signed to the purpose of developing commercial relations between Italian East Africa and the United Kingdom, India, and British colonies and protectorates. However, they had a political

implication and were meant to keep the road open in case the alliance with Germany did not work.

Besides sponsoring Tagore's, Iqbal's and Gandhi's visits to Italy, with which we shall deal in detail later on, the Consul General in Calcutta, Gino Scarpa, planned in the 1930s an Italian cultural mission to India. In 1933 he happened to meet Vittorio Macchioro, an archaeologist and historian of religions, to whom he proposed an assignment as visiting professor in some Indian universities. According to Scarpa, Macchioro, who had been to America for a series of lectures on Orphism and Greek religion, was the right person to speak on a subject near to the Hindu mentality. With the approval of Gentile, Macchioro reaches Benares in early 1934; there, with the help of the vice-chancellor Pundit Malaviya, an important nationalist leader, he planned his lectures for the new academic year; instead of speaking of Orphism and Greek religion he was convinced of delivering lectures starting from the Italy of Renaissance to the modern Italy of Mussolini both at Benares, Delhi and Calcutta universities. In the span of a year Macchioro realized that his Indian and Italian sponsors were only interested in their own political problems and that he had been exploited for political reasons. Disenchanted and disappointed, Macchioro gave up; in one of his letters, dated 5th May 1935, wrote: "I ask myself what is the purpose of my 'mission'? [...] I think that at the bottom there is a sort of wrong and absurd vision, a fruit of the imagination of Scarpa, who has seen who knows what in the spreading of the Italian culture in India and has communicated these dreams to high-up where they are always ready to accept bizarre ideas which create great sensation and give occasion to theatrical attitudes".[16] It is another demonstration of an unplanned foreign policy, dependent on situations and men.

During the war this interest for the Indian Ocean was stated in two lectures by admiral Giuseppe Fioravanzo at the

IsMEO on 21st January and 3rd February 1941: though the lectures were too general and too vague, they were written to make a clear propaganda to the action of the Italian Navy.

However, the Foreign Office had never ignored Mussolini's real attitudes towards Britain. Since 1923, at the time of the crisis of the occupation of Corfu by the Italians, Lord Curzon was aware of the fact that some Indian revolutionaries entertained contacts with Mussolini, who receiving them in Rome on 27th February had assured them of his assistance as his task was to expel the British from the Mediterranean. Of course, he had added he would do it with the greatest care so that the Italian government was not involved in it.[17]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Galeazzo Ciano (1903-1944) entered the diplomatic service in 1925, married Mussolini's daughter Edda in 1930. He was appointed Undersecretary for Press and Propaganda in 1934-1935, Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1936, a position he left on 5th February 1943. In the historical meeting of the "Gran Consiglio del Fascismo" on 25th July 1943 he voted in favour of Dino Grandi's "Order of the Day" against Mussolini. He was tried for high treason in front of a special tribunal of the "Repubblica Sociale Italiana" in Verona, sentenced to death and shot on 11th January 1944.

[2] Dino Grandi (1895-1988), Undersecretary for the Interior in 1924-1925 and for Foreign Affairs in 1929-1932, Ambassador to London from 1932 to 1939, Minister for Justice from 1939 to 1943. With his "Order of the Day" of 25th July 1943 he caused Mussolini's fall: he was sentenced to death by default in 1944. He returned to Italy after the war and was granted an amnesty.

[3] Benito Mussolini, *Verso il suolo asiatico - Malabar*, in "Il Popolo d'Italia", Milano, 4 settembre 1921; now in *Opera Omnia*, a cura di Edoardo e Duilio Susmel, Firenze, La Fenice, 1955, vol.XVII, pp.1201-121.

[4] In "Il Popolo d'Italia", Milano, 13 gennaio 1925.

[5] Arnaldo Mussolini, *I Discorsi (1928-1931)*, Milano, 1934, p.94.

[6] Mario Appelius, *India*, Milano, Casa editrice Alpes, 1925.

[7] Virginio Gayda, *Il risveglio dell'India*, in "Gerarchia", Roma, gennaio

1930, pp.51-56.

[8] In a chronological order. Santi Nava, *La marcia dei martiri: gli estremi del conflitto anglo-indiano*, in “La Vita Italiana”, marzo 1930, pp.257-261. Ettore Rossi, *La situazione in India*, in “Gerarchia”, marzo 1930, pp.192-197. G. Bevione, *La Conferenza di Londra*, in “Gerarchia”, aprile 1930, pp.277-284. Giuseppe De Lorenzo, *India e Inghilterra*, in “Gerarchia”, aprile 1930, pp.360-377. Santi Nava, *Il conflitto anglo-indiano: le denunzie di Gandhi e l’incognita musulmana*, in “La Vita Italiana”, maggio 1930. R. Caniglia, *Il fascismo ed i nazionalismi di colore*, in “Gerarchia”, ottobre 1930, pp.845-848. Arnaldo Cervesato, *Ritratto di Gandhi*, in “La Vita Italiana”, novembre 1930, pp.166-170 Minimus, *India moderna, Gandhi e Inghilterra*, in “Gerarchia”, maggio 1931, pp.382-393. Roberto Farinacci, *Gandhi e i suoi critici*, in “La Vita Italiana”, ottobre 1931, p.384. Giuseppe De Lorenzo, *Asia ed Europa*, in “Gerarchia”, maggio 1931, pp.359-381.

[9] “Les Indes sont bien le coffre-fort du monde. Il faut que l’Italie les possède. Peu leur importe ce que les Anglais diront. Les légionnaires fascistes se chargeraient de les faire taire ... ”. See Krsta Chantitch-Chandan, *L’unité yougoslave et le roi Alexandre Ier*. Préface par le Maréchal F. D’Espérey, Paris, P. Bossuet, 1931, quoted by Loretta De Felice, *Un fondo bibliografico, d’interesse documentario, conservato nell’Archivio Centrale dello Stato. La “Collezione Mussolini”*, “Storia Contemporanea”, XIV, N.3, giugno 1983, pp.489-498.

[10] Gino Scarpa, a man close to Mussolini, had been to India from 1923 onwards: he was Consul General in Calcutta in the years 1929-1933.

[11] With the co-operation of Pyarelal, Mirabehn and Srinivasa Sastri, he prepared a translation from English into Gujarati of Gandhi’s autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, 1927, in two volumes

[12] Viator, *L’India dove va?*, Roma, Libreria del Littorio, 1930, pp.82-83.

[13] Ibidem, p.95.

[14] A report is in “Il Popolo d’Italia”, Milano, 19 marzo 1931, p.2.

[15] Robert Mallett, *The Italian Navy and Fascist Expansionism 1935-1940*, London, Frank Cass Publisher, 1998.

[16] Ilia Capiluppi, *Un “inviato speciale” di Mussolini in India. La missione culturale di Vittorio Macchioro (1933-1935)*, in “Storiografia”, Pisa-Roma, 7, 2003, p.130.

[17] Richard Lamb, *Mussolini and the British*, London, John Murray, 1997.

CHAPTER I
INDIA IN THE FIRST HALF OF 20TH CENTURY

The Revolt of 1857-58 was for the British in India a signal that something had changed; though it was mainly feudal and limited to some parts of India, it had shaken the British administration from the bottom. After the assumption of the direct administration of India by the Crown something moved, though slowly, in the field of education: between 1857 and 1887 five universities were founded (Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Lahore, and Allahabad). However a true silent revolution started when the English language and culture spread all over the Indian subcontinent: Indians, mainly Hindus, were thus able to look to English liberalism and institutions for inspiration. The few hundreds students, who could benefit of the English language as the medium in higher education in India before the Revolt, became many thousands by the end of 19th century. It was this system of education that became the vehicle of Western culture and brought about a real revolution in India. The new Western learning dispensed in the English high schools and colleges exerted a big influence, thus facilitating the Indian recovery; by it India shared in the rich legacy of science and rational thought that was the product of the 19th century. Even though the number of these Western-educated Indians has never been large, two and a half million in the 1920's, the seed had been sown.[1]

The second step was the foundation of political parties.

The first was the Indian National Congress which met in Bombay during the Christmas week of 1885. It was created by an English retired civil servant, Allan Octavian Hume, with the initial consent of the Governor-General who had thought of it as a place for discussions only: on the contrary, its objective was, indirectly, to be "the germ of a Native Parliament", a sort of "constitutional channel for the discharge of the increasing ferment which had resulted from western ideas and education".[2] In the beginning the Congress was a body open to all and in five years the attendance of Muslims increased from 2 out of a total of 70 in 1885 to 156 out of a total of 702 in 1890. In 1905 the attendance of Muslim dropped to 17 out of a total of 756.

It had happened that the Muslims had realized the Congress was going to transform the nationalist movement from a purely secular to a politico-religious one. Besides, in the background, the English were probably working in order to split the party to better control it. However, it is true that the Muslims were discriminated, but this was because they were far behind the Hindus in respect of Western learning. It was Syed Ahmad Khan, the leader of the Muslims, who found the remedy for the backward situation of his co-religionists; he promoted English education through a school which became, later on, known as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of 'Aligarh. In the long run, this situation brought to the creation of a Muslim party, the Muslim League, which was founded at Dacca in 1906.

In a few years the British became aware of the true soul of the Congress. Lord Curzon himself, an ardent student of Indian history, who at the beginning of his viceroyalty (1899-1904) was really interested in facing the country's problems, went back on what he had thought of before when he realized of the growing national sentiment inside the Congress.

The first demonstrations of this insurgent nationalism were the reforms of education which culminated with the Universities Act of 1904 and of administration in Bengal with the partition into two separate provinces in 1905. These two acts were partly responsible for the Congress uncompromising declaration regarding self-government [*swaraj*] in 1905 and for the creation of the Muslim League in 1906. Though the partition of Bengal was by itself a reasonable administrative act, it was wrong from the political point of view because it interfered with "the growth of a true national spirit transcending creed and community. The partition of Bengal, carried out despite the strongest opposition from Nationalists, whose leaders included both Hindus and Muslims, roused a fierce spirit of resistance among them, and gave a new turn to the political movement".[3]

The situation worsened all over India, in particular in Bengal and in Punjab where popular unrest resulted in many extremist actions. The government resorted to repressive methods, but contemporarily tried to moderate the situation by granting the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, that is including an Indian member in the Governor-General's Executive Council, and by modifying the partition of Bengal in 1911. Unfortunately the 1909 reforms contained a new element of dissension inside the Congress, by providing separate electorates for the Muslims: all the Hindus representatives in the Congress, Moderates and Radicals, considered it an act by the British to divide the Indian community. No need to say that the introduction of the separate electorates was deliberately carried on by the British Government to set the Muslim League against the Indian National Congress.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 many politicians in Europe, particularly in Britain, thought this would be the occasion for Indian Nationalists to stab the

English in the back and to throw off the yoke of the British raj. On the contrary, India as a whole supported Britain in her war against the central Empires: British India and the Native States of India, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs declared in favour of the Allied cause. The contribution of men, arms and money was enormous: more than 26,000 Indian soldiers were killed and 70,000 were wounded.

In December 1916, for the first and only time, the Congress and the League made an agreement, the "Lucknow pact", in force of which the Congress accepted the project of separate electorates, and the two organizations started working jointly for a constitutional scheme on the basis of Dominion status.

In the period 1915-16 the new generation of nationalists insisted for self-government: the younger intellectuals, both Hindus and Muslims, were becoming more nationalistic than their old leaders. Their hopes increased when Edwin Montague became State Secretary for India: on 20th August 1917, in the House of the Commons, he announced that "the policy of His Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". At the end of the year, on 10th November, Montague arrived in India for a long tour until 23rd April 1918: on 26th November he met at Delhi the delegations representing the Congress and the Muslim League, among them old Surendranath Banerji, 'Ali Jinnah, Gandhi, and Tilak who "came with [his] Home Rule League".[4] The result was the Montague-Chelmsford Report which was published on 8th July 1918.

Though this report constituted an improvement of the Morley-Minto scheme of government, it was considered

unsatisfactory after India's tremendous support to Britain during the war. The left wing of the Congress, guided by B. G. Tilak,[5] opposed it as inadequate, disappointing and unsatisfactory. Again the Congress split into two sections: the moderates and the radicals; however, pending the war, the Congress continued in its co-operation with Britain.

1919 was the key year. In January the US President, Woodrow Wilson, enunciated the Fourteen Points which spoke of self-determination of nations: India started hoping in a self-government of her own. At the same time two events created new embitterment in the country: the coercive measures of the "Rowlatt Act" which authorised imprisonment without trial and the massacre by the British army at Amritsar during a peaceful meeting of protest. Besides, the Muslim community was offended by the dismemberment of the Turkish empire and by the end of the Caliphate.

> And then Gandhi came – as Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *Discovery of India* - political freedom acquired a new content. [...] A new technique of action was evolved which, though perfectly peaceful yet involved non-submission to what was considered wrong and, as a consequence, a willing acceptance of the pain and suffering involved in this. Gandhi was an odd kind of pacifist for he was an activist full of dynamic energy. There was no submission in him to fate or anything that he considered evil; he was full of resistance though this was peaceful and courteous.[6]

From now on the political scene of India will be dominated by the powerful personality of Gandhi: loved by his people, criticized or hated by many others, he was respected by all, the British included. Non-violence [*ahimsa*] and truth-force [*satyagraha*] were the pillars of his belief; after experimenting them in South Africa, the Mahatma returned to India in 1914 and in May 1915 established an *ashram* at Ahmedabad with a bunch of disciples who had the

task of teaching his ideas to the Indian masses.

The first practical enforcement of his credo was the *hartal* Gandhi called against the "Rowlatt Act" for 30th March 1919, postponed to 6th April. Unfortunately the new date was not known in Delhi and the *hartal* took place there on 30th March: some shop-keepers at the railway station did not observe it, there were riots, police intervened and some people were killed during the disorder. Gandhi had decided to visit Delhi and Amritsar in the Punjab: for fear of disturbances it was forbidden to Gandhi to go to the Punjab: he was arrested and sent back to Bombay. The news of Gandhi's arrest created problems in the area, but the biggest incident took place at Amritsar in early April; after days of rioting, on 13th April a big crowd collected at Jalyanwala Bagh for a peaceful protest, unaware or ignorant of a military order which forbade any meeting. General Dyer arrived at the garden with his Gurkha troops and, without any warning, ordered to fire. It was a massacre which embittered for years the Anglo-Indian relations: Gandhi was shocked and suspended passive resistance.

He resumed it a year after on the occasion of the Caliphate movement to support the Muslims: the National Congress met at Calcutta in September 1920 and passed Gandhi's proposal of "progressive non-violent non-cooperation", which meant an almost complete stop to the main activities all over the country. This was a shrewd device to unite the two major communities in India: the climax was the burning of foreign cloth in 1921, which unfortunately produced the violent rebellion of the Muslim Moplahs in the province of Madras. Incidentally, as already mentioned in the Introduction, this was the subject of Mussolini's first article dealing with the Indian problems: for the future *Duce* the independence of India was prophetically "not a matter of possibility, but a problem of time".[7]

Another violent incident took place in February 1922: a mob set fire to a police station at Chauri Chaura, in the United Provinces, burning to death twenty-two policemen. Again Gandhi suspended the civil disobedience: many members of the Congress, included Jawaharlal Nehru, did not agree. Could an isolated episode influence a national struggle and frustrate the efforts of hundred thousands patriots? However, Gandhi's personality prevailed and the Congress accepted his decision. Gandhi was put to trial by the Government and sentenced to six years in jail: the trial seemed to have come out of Socrates' pages of *Apology* where the judge is sorry to inflict a penalty and the defendant is asking for the maximum of penalty.

The Mahatma retired from politics and the direction of the Congress passed into the hands of C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. Though Gandhi was released in February 1924, earlier than foreseen, he decided stay away from the activity of the Congress and to concentrate on the problem of removing untouchability.

In this period there emerged in the Congress a younger generation of politicians, more radical: the prominent among them were Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, whose goal was a complete national independence. On the contrary, the Government was now ready to grant India the status of Dominion: "[...] it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress [...] is the attainment of Dominion status". There was now a wide gap between the two positions, and the government offered to hold in London a Round Table Conference.

In the meantime, new facts had altered the whole scene. The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League separated definitely: Gandhi returned to active political life in order to compose the gap between moderates and extremists inside the Congress; 'Ali Jinnah left the Congress

and later on left India for London where he worked as a lawyer, in a sort of voluntary exile until 1936.

To support the 1929 Congress' request for complete independence, Gandhi resumed the weapon of civil disobedience. On 12th March 1930 he defied the Government on the salt tax by starting a long march from Ahmedabad to the sea: on 6th April he violated the law by extracting symbolically some grams of salt from sea-water. This event marked the beginning of a new civil disobedience: great emphasis was given to it in the newspapers all over the world. The Mahatma was arrested on 5th May; along with him 60,000 *satyagrahi*, as his followers were called, were jailed.

As already announced, the First Round Table Conference took place in London from 12th November 1930 to 19th January 1931: it was attended by some ten princes and by Muslim delegates, among whom the Agha Khan[8] and 'Ali Jinnah,[9] the Congress was absent. In spite of the heavy agenda and the bulky work, the proceedings of which filled eight volumes, the results were almost nil except the official approval of the obsolete principle of a federal government for India.

A second Round Table Conference was scheduled from 7th September to 1st December 1931: Gandhi was released in Spring 1931 and the Congress approved to be represented solely by him at the Conference. At the second Conference, besides M.A. Jinnah, there was the revered Muslim poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal[10] who had a great influence on Jinnah, though, at the time, their opinions diverged: in 1930 Jinnah still believed in the unity of Muslims and Hindus, while Iqbal, at the Muslim League session in Allahabad, had said that "to base a constitution on the conception of a homogeneous India, or to apply to India the principles dictated by British democratic sentiments, is unwittingly to prepare her for a civil war". Scarce was the

result of this second Conference because of the disagreement between Gandhi and the Muslim delegation.

It was this the period in which the fascist government in Italy tried to take advantage, from a propagandistic point of view, of the fact that many Indian delegates to the Second Round Table Conference were passing through Rome in order to board a ship at Brindisi or at Venice on their way back to India. A confidential report, most probably written by the Italian Consul General in Calcutta, who was in those days in Rome, dated 8th October 1931 said:

> It would be convenient to inquire whether the delegates intend to remain in Europe waiting for the re-convocation or to go back to India.
> In both cases, particularly in the first case, there are possibilities of some of them coming to Italy.

1-The "Accademia d'Italia" has already invited Dr. Sir M. Iqbal: on the occasion, other Muslim leaders are surely coming.

2- The two representatives of the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce expressed to me, while in India, their wish to visit Italy and to meet important persons of our economical world. One of these is Mr. Dirla, who controls the jute market in Calcutta (Two years ago he gave a tea-party in honour of the *Duce*'s daughter, which was attended by 300 people).

Concerning these delegates, for whom I think there are no objections, it is necessary to know the form of assistance to be given and to see whether a particular invitation is to be sent (Fascist Federation for Industry, University "Bocconi",[11] or similar).

3- There is also a possible visit of the two hindu leaders Gandhi and Malaviya (the chancellor of Benares University where a lecture on "Fascism and the *Duce*" was held two years ago at the presence of two hundred professors and all

the students).

It is also possible they intend to pay a visit to the Pope.

In April 1930 the Press Agency of the Holy See, at the beginning of Gandhi's campaign published a note declaring that the Vatican did not have any objection to a possible autonomy of India and to Gandhi's ideas, asking only for an assurance about the situation of Catholics in India.

This visit is meant to give such assurance and to get at the same time the sympathies of the Vatican.

I would like to have instructions in case of the visit of these two leaders.

Since a Muslim leader [Iqbal] has been invited, it might be convenient, under certain aspects, to invite the Hindu leader [Gandhi] in order not to hurt the feelings of his community of two hundred and eighty million people.[12] The Hindus and the nationalists in particular do not support the recent campaign of lies and boycotting against Italy and the *Duce*, for whom they show their sympathy.

For my knowledge of Gandhi I can say he is much different from Tagore; he has always refused to express judgements on people and forms of government in other Countries - and I do not think he will behave differently.

If his visit is considered useful, I think we must approach him and explain him that there would not be any advantage for the interests of our two Countries for him to express any judgements on the regime. In case he agrees, we can rely on his complete discretion.[13]

Back to India, Gandhi revived civil disobedience and was sent again to jail. The situation for the British in India had come to a head: besides, in the North-West Frontier Province, an important but difficult area to rule, a party had been formed in 1930 by 'Abd al Ghaffar Khan, a Muslim

who, like Gandhi, preached nationalism in a non-violent way: the party of the "Servants of Allah" [*Khuda-i Khidmatgar*], called "Red Shirts" [*Surkh Posh*] because of their garments, was affiliated to the Congress. It was unusual to see Pathans, known for their martial attitudes, preaching non-cooperation among the peasants and inviting them not to pay taxes; and more unusual was that a province with ninety per cent Muslims was a Congress stronghold.

The third and last Round Table Conference took place from 17th November to 24th December 1932. The Congress was not represented, Jinnah did not attend it because he had not been included in the delegation on the ground that "he was not thought to represent any considerable school of opinion in India".[1414] Disillusioned with politics, Jinnah settled in London looking after his legal profession; years later, in a speech to the students of 'Aligarh, in 1938, he explained his reasons. Speaking of the Round Tables Conferences, he said: "In the face of danger, the Hindu sentiment, the Hindu mind, the Hindu attitude led me to the conclusion that there was no hope of unity. [...] The Mussalmans were like dwellers in No Man's Land. [...] I felt so disappointed and so depressed that I decided to settle down in London".[15]

The outcome of the conferences was the *Government of India Act* of 1935, which remained unaltered, in its principles, until the transfer of power to India and Pakistan in 1947.

This is not the place to examine in detail the new law: it is enough to say that in the elections of 1937, out of thirty million voters 70 per cent were Hindu and 30 per cent were Muslims. Even so, a co-operation was impossible: Nehru said that only two parties existed in the Country, Congress and the British; Jinnah objected that there was a third party, the Muslims. The impossibility of working together derived from the fact that the Muslim League was very weak: she

had got only 5 per cent of the Muslim votes.

Mahatma Gandhi remained an icon but, from now on, the practical management of India's policy passed mainly into the hands of two Hindus, Nehru[16] and Bose,[17] and a Muslim, Jinnah.

The years 1937-39 were an interlocutory period: only the Congress participated in the new provincial legislatures, while the princely States and the Muslim League turned down federation.

On the insistence of Liyaqat 'Ali Khan,[18] future Prime Minister of Pakistan, 'Ali Jinnah returned to India to re-organize the Muslim League which in the elections of 1946 got 73 seats (out of 78 allocated to the Muslims); in the same elections the Congress got 203 seats out of 210). Hence, the two parties became the only two forces able to speak for the whole of India. Previously, on the instance of Jinnah who had converted to Iqbal's idea of "two nations",[19] expressed by the Poet at Allahabad in 1930[20] and repeated in a letter of 21st June 1937,[21] the Muslim League had approved at Lahore, on the 23rd March 1940, an official Resolution towards the creation of Pakistan. Four days before, on 19th March, at Ramgarh, in Bihar, the Congress had decided in favour of civil disobedience, which was however given up after the collapse of France and the German air blitz over England.

Only on 8th August did the Viceroy promise to India a dominion status, but after the conclusion of the war; even the announcement that "full weight should be given to the views of the minorities" was too vague.

The last hopes for India's full independence came on 14th August 1941 from the Atlantic Charter announced by Churchill and Roosevelt: one of the eight points, in brief, stated that "all peoples had a right to self-determination"; but, soon after, Churchill made it clear that it did not apply

to British India, thus creating bad feelings among the Indians for this double standard of behaviour.[22] And in April 1942 after the British Army had lost Singapore, Malaya, and Burma, in a letter to a friend on 22nd April 1942, and repeated to the press, the Mahatma wrote:

> My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not to run the risk that they did in Singapore and Malaya and Burma [...] Britain cannot defend India, much less herself on Indian soil with any strength. The best thing she can do is to leave India to her fate. I feel somehow that India will not do badly then.[23]

The apex of the relations between Gandhi and the British was reached on 8th August 1942 when the Committee of the Indian Congress adopted the "Quit India" Resolution. In an interview to the newspaper "The Hindu", published on 21st June, Gandhi had said that the two communities will come together almost immediately after the British power comes to a final end in India. If independence is the immediate goal of the Congress and the League then, without needing to come to any terms, all will fight together to be free from bondage. When this bondage is done with, not merely the two organizations but all parties will find it to their interest to come together and make the fullest use of the liberty in order to evolve a national government suited to the genius of India. I do not care what it is called, whatever it is, in order to be stable, it has to represent the masses in the fullest sense of the term. And, if it is to be broad-based upon the will of the people, it must be predominantly non-violent.[24]

Did he think of the foreseen blood-baths in an India prey of communalism, with the minorities such as the Muslims and the Sikhs, in particular, under a majority Hindu government, without the presence of a unified Indian Army and the British officers, who became suddenly without any responsible guide?

At the same time, because of rumours, probably spread by the British Intelligence Service, maybe with some Muslim connivance, Gandhi was accused of leanings in favour of the Axis powers. His answer was clear:

> I have no desire whatsoever to woo any power to help India in her endeavour to free herself from the foreign yoke. I have no desire to exchange the British for any other rule. Better the enemy I know than the one I do not. I have never attached the slightest importance or weight to the friendly professions of the Axis power. If they come to India they will come not as deliverers but as sharers in the spoil.[25]

Though the Mahatma did not doubt of Chandra Bose's sacrifice or patriotism, he stated "that he was misguided and that his way could never lead to India's deliverance", hinting of course to Bose's alliance with Japan and his leading the INA troops against British India.

Besides, Gandhi's faith in a unified India was shaken by Jinnah's statement: "Pakistan is an article of faith with Muslim India and we depend upon nobody except ourselves for the achievement of our goal". Prompt was the Mahatma's answer: "If Pakistan is an article of faith with him, indivisible India is equally an article of faith with me. Hence there is a stalemate. But today there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan. It is Englistan. So I say to all India, let us first convert it into the original Hindustan and then adjust all rival claims".[26]

Although no actual preparations had been made by the Congress, the British reacted strongly: under the input of Churchill who disliked Gandhi intensely - as a matter of fact he spoke of him as the "naked faqir" - in the early hours of 9th August all the Congress leaders were arrested and the Congress was declared an illegal body.

The years of the war, in particular 1942-1945, were very difficult: no Indian trusted anymore the promises of the

British Government after Churchill's declaration, which was just the opposite of the Viceroy's statement. All the Congress leaders were in jail, shortage of food and high prices afflicted the masses, martial law was imposing, recruitment was at the pace of 50,000 men per month, war factories were built to meet the demands of the Army, the figure of the people employed increased to ten times and the production of weapons from ten to fifty times.[27]

The war ended in Europe in April-May 1945; new elections in Great Britain brought to power the Labour Party: on 26th July Winston Churchill was replaced by Clement Attlee whose first act was the announcement of self-government for India and the setting up of an interim government "to give the Viceroy [Lord Wavell] greater freedom in order that in the period which is to elapse while a constitution is worked out you may have a government enjoying the greatest possible support in India".[28] On 23rd March 1946 a three-men Cabinet Mission reached India: it was made up of Pethick-Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A. V. Alexander. In spite of their goodwill, the results were nil because the contrasts between Congress and League were unsolvable - Nehru acted as the spokesman of the nation in force of his majority, Jinnah did not consider the Muslims a minority but a nation, insisting on his claim of Pakistan.[29] Besides, both Congress and League wanted Great Britain to relinquish immediate authority to a sovereign interim Indian government. The entire situation can be summed up in two slogans addressed to the English: "You quit and then we will divide" (the Congress); "You divide and then quit" (the League).

In a speech at the House of Commons, on 18th June, Stafford Cripps had remarked in an honest way that "the issue of 'one or two Indias' had been bitterly contested at the elections and the two major parties, the Congress and the Muslim League, had each of them almost swept the

board in their respective constituencies" and that "the circumstances of the spring of 1946 were vastly different from those of 1942 or 1939", adding that "India has shared to the full in the political awakening which is evident all over the world after the war and nowhere perhaps more than in the Far East".[30]

This *impasse* was broken by the Muslim League, who supported the achievement of Pakistan by announcing a *hartal* against both Congress and Britain: the *hartal*, called "Direct Action Day", took place on 16th August 1946 and was the beginning of massacres everywhere lasting for months.

In an effort to save the situation, Clement Attlee called a meeting in London on 3rd December: it was attended by the Viceroy Lord Wavell, Jawaharlal Nehru for the Congress, M. 'Ali Jinnah and Liyaqat 'Ali Khan for the League, Sardar Baldev Singh for the Sikhs. After a three-day talks, the members returned to India with no solution.

On 23rd March 1947, Lord Mountbatten replaced Lord Wavell as Viceroy and prepared to dispose of the British Empire of India. In spite of Gandhi's strong opposition to the division of the country,[31] on 21st April 1947 Nehru agreed officially to the idea of partition. On the evening of 3rd June, Lord Mountbatten announced the plan over All-India Radio: actually, though all Indians were happy for the recovered independence from the British crown after one and a half century of domination, none of them was satisfied for the partition. The Hindus and the Nationalists deplored the vivisection of India, the Muslims were not satisfied with the "truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan", as M. A. Jinnah had described it. However, it was the best practicable solution of the Indian problem at the moment, even though it was not in any case the best solution. On 18th July the bill for the transfer of power to two dominions became law: Great Britain was definitely relinquishing India

along with her suzerainty over the 562 Princely States, all of them, with a few exceptions, joining the new dominion of India.

At midnight of 14th August 1947, the two nations of Bharat and Pakistan were born. India comprised the whole sub-continent except the territories which joined Pakistan, namely West Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, North-Western Frontier Province and East Bengal.

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3 R. C. Majumdar, H. C. Raychaudhuri, Kalikinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, London, Macmillan, 1958, p.980.
4 Edwin S. Montague, *An Indian Diary*, London, 1930, p.56.
5 B.G.Tilak (1856-1920) started his political career in Maharashtra in 1880, joining the Congress in 1889. He has been described as the "Father of the Indian Revolution. See D. P. Karmakar, *Bal Gangadhar Tilak. A Study*, Bombay, Popular Book Depot, 1956.
6 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, The Signet Press, 1946, p.313.
7 See note 3 of the Introduction.
8 Agha Khan (1875-1957), a spiritual head of the Khoja, a branch of the Isma'ilis.
9 Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), Life President of the Muslim League in 1934, first Governor General of Pakistan (August 1947-September 1948).
10 For Iqbal, see chapter III.
11 The commercial university "Bocconi" was founded in Milan in 1902.
12 For Iqbal's and Gandhi's visits, see chapters III and IV respectively.
13 *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, VII serie 1922-1935, Roma, 1981, vol.XI, pp.81-82.
14 Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah Creator of Pakistan*, London, John Murray, 1954, p.99.
15 Ibidem, p.100.
16 For Nehru, see chapter VI.
17 For Bose, see chapter VII.

[18] Liyaqat 'Ali Khan (1896-1951), first Prime Minister of Pakistan.

[19] *Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah*, Lahore, S. M. Ashraf, 1956. They are letters written by the poet-philosopher from May 1936 to November 1937, a few months before his death.

[20] I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single state. Self-government within the British Empire, or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim state appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India". From the Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League, 29th December 1930, in *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, compiled and edited by Latif Ahmad Sherwani, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2009, 5th edition, p.11.

[21] A separate federation of Muslim Provinces is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims".

[22] In 1942 Gandhi wrote to President Roosevelt: "I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for the freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow so long as India and for that matter Africa are exploited by Great Britain".

[23] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi, in 100 volumes, published between 1960 and 1994. See Vol.82 (9 February 1942-6 June 1942, p.229.

[24] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, vol.83 (7 June 1942-26 January 1944), p.16.

[25] 25. Ibidem, p.18.

[26] Ibidem, p.120.

[27]T. W. Wallbank, quoted, pp.208-209.

[28] Mohammad Ashraf (compiled by), *Cabinet Mission and After*, Lahore, M. Ashraf, [1946], p.1.

[29] On the occasion of the All-India Muslim League Convention at Delhi, on 7th-9th April 1946, M. A. Jinnah explained: "The Congress claim is founded on nationality, which does not exist, except in the eyes of those who merely dream. Our formula is based on the territory of this subcontinent being carved into two sovereign States of Hindustan and Pakistan". M. Ashraf, quoted, p.23.

[30] Ibidem, p.254.

[31] Gandhi's plan and suggestions have been reported in *Partition and Independence of India. Inside Story of the Mountbatten Days* by Manmath Nath Das, New Delhi, East-West Publications (U.K.) Ltd, 1982. The Author has based his work on "The Mountbatten Papers", not open to general view, and on an interview with Earl Mountbatten in 1976.

CHAPTER II
MUSSOLINI AND TAGORE

In January 1925, on his way back to India, Rabindranath Tagore arrived in Italy. The peaceful atmosphere of the poet's journey from Buenos Aires to Genoa changed suddenly. Tagore intended to reach Venice via Milan and take the first available ship to India.

The poet and his party were not at all prepared for receptions and welcomes in Italy, but Mussolini had decided to exploit Tagore's visit and make all the political advantage he could out of it.

The Italian political horizon was full of uncertainty and difficulties. On 10th June 1924 the socialist and anti-fascist member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Giacomo Matteotti, had been murdered. Two days after, hundred and thirty-five members of the Chamber abandoned the Parliament. Most probably Mussolini had not given any personal order to kill Matteotti, but he was morally guilty since he was the leader of the fascist movement including the extreme wings of the party. Anyhow, on 3rd January 1925, three weeks before Tagore's arrival, Mussolini stopped the opposition and enforced a dictatorial regime.

Tagore reached Milan on 21st January. He was accompanied by some relatives and his faithful secretary Leonard Helmhirst; on the train from Genoa to Milan there was Carlo Formichi,[1] an indologist sent by Mussolini with the task of capturing the poet and controlling his staying in

Italy, and taking him to Rome in particular.

Among other prominent persons to welcome Tagore at Milan station there was Duke Tommaso Gallarati Scotti who was of considerable help and later steered the poet to overcome safely all the political entanglements.

Unfortunately or fortunately for him, Tagore got sick and was confined to bed for ten days. During this period it was Duke Gallarati Scotti who explained the poet the heavy political situation of that period and the danger of his meeting Mussolini: his meeting would be exploited and his words would be altered and misunderstood.

Before getting sick, Tagore could speak at the Circolo Filologico on 22nd January. His was not a lecture on a pre-arranged subject but a conversation from brother to brother, a pilgrimage among the souls in the name of universal love. Tagore's talk in English was not recorded but the main newspapers reported some passages in Italian. We have been able to find a remarkable passage in a Milan newspaper:

> Today you suffer. The shadow of Europe's misery is thrown on the world. You were great when you were able to love. Today you suffer because you do not love. The lack of love does not allow us to create beautiful things. The monotonous mask of a commercial civilization does not express the spirit. Beauty comes from patience, and greedy people do not have any. Where is today a voice able to speak on behalf of all the human beings?[2]

On 25th January the "Corriere della Sera" published a short notice announcing the repetition of the same lecture in Naples; but Tagore did not go either to Naples or to Rome. His sudden illness was providential for him. On 28th January his health was better and he decided to leave for Venice. In a press release he apologized for his impossibility to extend his stay in Italy and promised to come back next summer "when weather conditions are similar to those of

my country". This last sentence was surely added to gild the pill. In fact the press release concluded by saying that he intended to buy a house near a lake in Lombardy in order to be able to stay in Italy longer. This news was meant to flatter the government and to demonstrate that the poet was not hostile to fascism.

While in Venice, before boarding the Lloyd Triestino ship to India on 1st February, Tagore took the opportunity to emphasize the "misunderstanding and the contrast" between India and Europe:

> When voyages were difficult the messengers of the West reached the South East with a spiritual preparation to understand the peoples they visited. This was the attitude of Marco Polo who loved the people of the East and was loved by them in an atmosphere of sincere attraction. Today, when the longest voyage can be considered a picnic, passengers visit tourist places and hotels in India, but do not knock at the doors of the houses to know the real conditions of their inhabitants.[3]

More or less was Elmhirst's description of the events:

> The journey from Buenos Aires to Genoa was both peaceful and productive but we were not at all prepared for the official fuss and reception that welcomed us on our arrival in Italy. Mussolini had apparently decided to make what political capital he could out of Tagore's visit and he was determined to bring Tagore to Rome, if he could, by sending a special reception committee to capture him. Luckily we had to travel via Milan where we were cared for by good friends who warned us of the political danger of his [Tagore's] public appearances, and these were, in consequence, apart from one visit to the Scala, cut out altogether. Tagore had, I realized later, always hoped to form his own individual judgement of Mussolini when a suitable opportunity might arise, but he was now homesick for Santiniketan and so agreed to take ship direct from Venice as soon as a boat was available. Duke Gallarati Scotti and his

> wife took considerable risks both in Milan and later, to steer us safely past all the political schools and entanglements, and at last Tagore was happily settled in his chair, on a boat in Venice, homeward bound for India.[4]

After the failure of his first attempt, Mussolini started his own outflanking movement in order to capture Tagore's support. First of all he gave many facilities to Italian journalists supporters of his regime to go to India with the double purpose of getting first hand information and making propaganda in favour of fascism. Among them there was the well-known journalist Mario Appelius, author of a travel book *India*, widely circulated, which was dedicated to Mussolini, "the exceptional man who in the hour of despair had first rate capacity and courage". Common elements of the activity of the Italian journalists of that period were a nationalistic attitude, the glorification of the fascist homeland, irony and discredit towards other countries, in particular eastern countries not yet nations and under the colonial yoke of countries unfavourable to fascism.

On a cultural level the fascist propaganda was assigned to the previously mentioned Carlo Formichi and to the young orientalist Giuseppe Tucci.

In a book about India, Carlo Formichi reported what he had said to Tagore while travelling from Genoa to Milan:

> During the travel from Genoa to Milan Rabindranath wanted me to inform him about the political situation in Italy. It was the only time he heard me speaking of politics. I told him the painful story of the tragical disorder our country had been plunged in after the first world war, that is the story of strikes in public services and the impossibility of many Ministries to enforce the law, to reorganize public finance, to restore elephantine bureaucracy, in a word to give the country a government able to settle the serious problems of the time. I went on telling him how the soldiers, who had saved the country from external enemies, had joined the

> Fascist Party to save the country from internal enemies, and guided by an extraordinary man, Benito Mussolini, after an almost bloodless revolution, cherished and blessed by most Italians and approved by the king, held in their hands the reins of the Country, thus restoring, as if by magic, discipline and law. I added that only those who had undergone the pains of anarchy could understand the gratitude of the Italians to Fascism and the necessity to forgive violence needed to lead a horse by the bridle. Listening to my words, the Poet nodded with his head now and then.[5]

It is useless to say that it was a party version even though Formichi spoke honestly of the misunderstandings and difficulties of the Poet's speech at the Circolo Filologico, which opened the way to "harsh controversies, bitter discussions, suspects and hates [...]. Though the Poet spoke with good intentions, Fascists were right to consider him an unwelcome guest".[6]

On 20th August 1925 Carlo Formichi received from Tagore an invitation as a visiting professor to the Visvabharati University from November to the following March. Immediately after, Tagore sent a request for a lecturer of Italian and books of Italian Art and Aesthetics as in his university library there were only Benedetto Croce's works. This request was submitted directly to Mussolini who did not miss this opportunity.[7]

On 4th November 1925 Carlo Formichi left Brindisi carrying with him a collection of Italian classics and art books to be presented on behalf of Mussolini; at the same time Giuseppe Tucci was appointed Italian lecturer. Tagore reciprocated by sending to Mussolini his poetical Bengali work in ten volumes and a formal telegram which was of course considered by the Italian press as a support:

> Allow me to convey to you our gratitude in the name of Visva-bharati for sending us through Prof. Formichi your

> cordial appreciation of Indian civilization and deputing Prof. Tucci of the University of Rome for acquainting our students with Italian history and culture and working with us in various departments of oriental studies and also for the generous gift of books in your name, showing a spirit of magnanimity worthy of the traditions of your great country. I assure you that such an expression of sympathy from you as representative of the Italian people will open up a channel of communication for exchange of culture between your country and ours, having every possibility of developing into an event of great historical significance.[8]

On 8th December 1925 Carlo Formichi had the chance to speak to Tagore about his probable voyage to Italy. On that occasion Tagore told the Italian indologist that he was ready to go to Italy but only as a poet. And Formichi in perfect agreement added: "Thanks to Mussolini's magnanimity, the previous misunderstanding had been cleared, and I am sure that if you go to Italy as a poet your visit will be a triumph".

It is useless to underline this kind of tricky involvement. In spite of this statement the Calcutta "Modern Review" published in January 1926 an article against Fascism and went on with other attacks in the February and March issues.

Formichi's action was however successful. Tagore agreed on going to Italy and the Italian indologist informed immediately the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On 20th January 1926 Mussolini consented to the Poet's official visit.

Flood of words have been written on this visit. Actually the extant versions are three: the fascist report, that of Tagore's entourage, and the anti-fascist one.

Apart from the Italian newspapers which were totally unreliable since they had to publish the press communications issued by the government and were under the sword of Damocles' censorship, the only direct report of

Tagore's two meetings with Mussolini was that of Formichi who was present at the visits. About the first, on 31st May, Formichi reported that the conversation was extremely cordial and lasted for half an hour. In the second, on 13th June, Tagore spoke as a poet and the only commitment was his final sentence: "in the innermost nature of things there is an asleep creative force which is waiting for the impulse of a great personality in order to go into action", a statement which was quoted in several daily papers. As we can see, it was a vague commitment typical of the oriental behaviour which was however considered as consensus by the fascist press. In his book published three years after the events, Formichi made a short description of what had happened after Tagore's departure ending with: "I have polemized with him [Tagore] in foreign newspapers and I do not intend to go back to what has been the deepest disappointment of my life".[9]

Then there are the recollections of Tagore's entourage: his son Rathindranath and his daughter-in-law Pratima Devi, professor Prasanda Chandra Mahalanobis and his wife, besides his "secretary", a young prince, the son of the rajah of Tipperah, a small princely state in the north-east of India, near Calcutta – Tagore's faithful friend Elmhirst, who had arrived in Naples to meet the poet and to follow him, left Italy when he realized that he "was not at all approved of by the official Italian party of welcome".[10]

The direct sources are Tagore's letter to the "Manchester Guardian" published on 5th August 1926 and the articles in the Calcutta magazines "Modern Review" and "Visvabharati Quarterly" in September 1926.

In the five-page "Notes" published under the title of "Rabindranath Tagore visits Italy", the anonymous writer, who was surely somebody of the Visvabharati institution, wrote that, when the Poet was about to leave India for Italy, he did not entertain the idea of going there as a state guest.

From the report of the Secretaries of the Visva-bharati [Tagore's son Rathindranath and professor Mahalanobis], we can see that, whatever the reasons for his change of mind might have been, from the point of view of making the Visva-bharati known in Italy, the Poet's acceptance of the invitation of Mussolini was very fortunate.[11]

In writing thus it was meant to justify Tagore's official voyage. The notes covered photos of Tagore at the Baths of Caracalla, at the University of Rome, and at the Coliseum, with a chronicle of cultural events, in particular the Poet's lecture on the "Meaning of Art" on 8th June, with the attendance of Mussolini, the Foreign Secretary Dino Grandi, the Mayor of Rome, and many other notables. Besides, the poet was received by the king, had lunch with the British ambassador, and gave several interviews to newspaper reporters, though some of what he said was wrongly interpreted in the press. No mention of the meeting between Tagore and Benedetto Croce, and a short negative reference:

> There were some critical persons who objected to Italy paying too much attention to him [Tagore]. But such critics were few and far between.[12]

The political problem was faced in the last part of the "Notes" under a paragraph "Tagore's Condemnation of Fascism":

> A letter from Rabindranath Tagore addressed to Mr. C. F. Andrews, castigating the Fascists for their political conduct and for the dirty trick they played on the Poet by showing him only the good side of their government of Italy was recently published in the daily press. It came as a surprise to us after the glowing accounts of mutual understanding and fellowship that we received from the Secretaries of the Visva-bharati who accompanied the Poet to Europe. In this letter Tagore rebukes the Fascists for many crimes which they may have committed sometime in their private (national) life, but

> which Tagore somehow found out after he left Italy enjoying Fascist hospitality to the fullest and thanking the Fascists for their kindness till his last moment in Italy. It transpires in this letter that the Fascists hoodwinked Tagore in more than one way. They gave him such a whirl of nice experiences during his short stay in Italy that he could never for a moment dream that even the Fascists had a darker side to their character. They also published in the Fascist press exaggerated accounts of Tagore's views on their country and countrymen. Tagore found out the truth about Fascism evidently from non-Italians outside Italy and the false nature of the statements printed as emanating from him by reading translations of cuttings from the Italian papers.

We are at a loss to give any opinion on this sudden *dénouement*. Before this a message alleged to be from Tagore created a sensation in the Indian press by its strange phraseology and sentiment. Later on it was discovered that the message was a fraud and had nothing to do with the Poet. Here again is another letter from Tagore in which he subjects his erstwhile hosts and friends to a merciless chastisement for showing him round only the best part of their house and for telling people that he loved them much. Can we be sure that this letter either is genuine?[13]

The important part of this last passage is the "sudden dénouement", that is the conclusion, the alleged message from Tagore. Actually Tagore had made those declarations but in a different context and the fascist press had reported them according to their convenience.

Let us now concentrate on Tagore's long letter to his friend Charles F. Andrews on 20th July, published in the "Manchester Guardian" on 5th August 1926. The letter, divided into eight paragraphs, faced the problem of the "interviews in Italy":

> The interview is a dangerous trap in which our unwary opinions are not only captured but mutilated. Words that come out of a moment's mood are meant to be forgotten;

> but when they are snapshotted, most often our thoughts are presented in a grotesque posture which is chance's irony. The camera in this case being also a living mind, the picture becomes a composite one in which two dissimilar features of mentality have made a mésalliance that is likely to be unhappy and undignified. My interviews in Italy were the products of three personalities - the reporter's, the interpreter's, and my own. Over and above that, there evidently was a hum in the atmosphere of another insistent and universal whisper, which, without our knowing it, mingled in all our talks. Being ignorant of Italian I had no means of checking the result of this concoction. The only precaution which I could take was to repeat emphatically to all my listeners that I had had as yet no opportunity to study the history and character of Fascism.

Since then I have had the opportunity of learning the contents of some of these interviews from the newspaper cuttings that my friends have gathered and translated for me. And I was not surprised to find in them what was, perhaps, inevitable. Through misunderstanding, wrong emphasis, natural defects in the mediums of communication, and the pre-occupation of the national mind, some of these writings have been made to convey that I have given my deliberate opinion on Fascism, expressing my unqualified admiration.

This time it was not directly the people of Italy whose hospitality I enjoyed, but that of Mussolini himself as the head of the Government. This was, no doubt, an act of kindness, but somewhat unfortunate for me. For always and everywhere official vehicles, though comfortable, move only along a chalked path of programme too restricted to lead to any places of significance, or persons of daring individuality, providing the visitors with specially selected morsels of experience.

The only opinions I could gather in such an atmosphere of distraction were enthusiastically unanimous

in praise of Mussolini for having rescued Italy in a most critical moment of her history from the brink of ruin.

In the third paragraph, after saying that in Rome he had met "a seeker of peace[14] who was strongly convinced not only of the necessity but of the philosophy of Fascism", Tagore stated:

> [...] it is absurd to imagine that I could ever support a movement which ruthlessly suppresses freedom of expression, enforces observances that are against individual conscience, and walks through a blood stained path of violence and stealthy crime. I have said over and over again that the aggressive spirit of Nationalism and Imperialism religiously cultivated by most of the nations of the West is a menace to the whole world. The demoralisation which it produces in European politics is surely to have disastrous effects, especially upon the peoples of the East who are helpless to resist the western methods of exploitation. It would be most foolish, if it were not most criminal, to express my admiration for a political Ideal which openly declares its loyalty to brute force as the motive power of civilization. That barbarism is not altogether incompatible with material prosperity may be taken for granted but the cost is terribly great; indeed it is fatal. The worship of unscrupulous force as the vehicle of nationalism keeps ignited the fire of international jealousy, and makes for universal incendiarism, for a fearful orgy of devastation. The mischief of the infection of this moral aberration is great because today the races of humanity have come close together, and any process of destruction set going does its work on an enormously vast scale. Knowing all this could it be believed that I should have played my fiddle while an unholy fire was being fed with human sacrifice?

The other paragraphs dealt with historical problems: fascism an American infection?; Christianity and European political thought; aggrandisement of the slave state: a lesson from India. The seventh paragraph was devoted to Mussolini: Tagore's impression was typical of a mystic seer

who wanted to analyze the qualities of his interlocutor. Anyhow the Poet made his statement in the last paragraph "suspended appraisement" where he clarified his position and postponed his judgement to the future:

If Italy has made even a temporary gain through ruthless politics she may be excused for such an obsession; but for us, if we believe in idealism, there can be no such excuse. And therefore it would be wise for us to wait before we bring our homage to a person who has suddenly been forced upon our attention by a catastrophe, till through the process of time all the veils are removed that are woven around him by the vivid sensations of the moment.[15]

The next day the "Manchester Guardian" published an interview to Tagore while in London. The Poet stressed two points of his previous letter: first, that he wished he could have remained neutral with regard to Italian politics; second, that not only Italians but also many Englishmen in Italy had openly expressed in favour of fascism including the British ambassador in Rome, who "highly admires Mussolini and his doings, and was quite sure that Mussolini was the one man who could have saved Italy from utter bankruptcy and disorganisation".

The reaction of the Italian press was terrible. The "Popolo d'Italia", the Milan newspaper founded by Mussolini and directed by his brother Arnaldo, published an article in the style of which one can see Mussolini's personal influence:

> After his first experiment [the 1925 visit to Milan], Tagore has come to Italy a second time, has accepted the homage of the Government and of his Head, has shown off in the most important towns. This time too the "old man" has not aroused our sympathy. As far as we are concerned, when a poet does not understand the tragedy of his people, he is not a poet but a mystifier. This oblique dervish, whom others' mental deficiency has made a great man of him, has taken

> advantage of what Italy, always prodigal and refined to her guests, offered to him as a homage to the Indian people, who is great in history and truth, terrible in its enigmas. Later on, after crossing the borders, Tagore has suffered the bastard pressure and the order of Jews and Freemasons, and has given vent to his hate.[16]

The very same day also the Milan newspaper "Sera" made things worse by heaping contumelies on the Poet:

> procurer-looking, vicious teen-ager, small poet, affected love-gardener, admired by hysterical women, great sponger, mechanical phonograph, in a carnival dress with a magician cap and a long loose garment typical of a discredited physician.[17]

The comment of the "Assalto" from Bologna on 28th August was hard and sarcastic:

> That Tagore, who has come to Italy twice to give us an essay of his very heavy poetic thinking, is an old ham worthy of out highest contempt [...]. This seer is the maintained of many governments. So much per lecture [...]. This man, slimy, insinuating, and honeyed like his words and poems, has come to Italy on invitation of the Government, paid and helped by the Government. He has praised Italy, magnified Fascism, extolled Mussolini [...]. This misshapen old man who impressed people with is long black garment and white beard, as soon as out of the Italian borders, has spoken ill of Italy, fascism and its great leader, much greater than him [...]. He has acted just like whores who always swear they are in love with their latest customer. Today we say that we do not like Tagore as a poet anymore because he is emasculated and backboneless, that we despise him as a man because he is false, dishonest and shameless.

And finally the anti-fascist version which involved many different people then and later on.

A global vision of the problem was faced by Gaetano Salvemini[18] in a long article published in 1957; unfortunately some of his words must be taken with the

benefit of inventory since they were expressed longer after the fall of fascism.

We think it is useful to examine the situation after Tagore's departure from Italy.

On 22nd June 1926 the Poet left for Switzerland: he was accompanied by Carlo Formichi as far as the border of Domodossola. Tagore's first stop was at Villeneuve where Romain Rolland lived. The famous writer, who got the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915, two years after Tagore's, left a journal *Inde* concerning the period from 1915 to 1943, which was published posthumously in a limited edition in 1951 and in a revised and enlarged edition in 1960.

Under the date of 23rd June 1926 Rolland wrote:

> Mahalanobis est sévère pour les amis italiens de Tagore, en particulier pour le prof. Formichi, le grande orientaliste, dont il juge sans indulgence la faiblesse de caractère, l'asservissement au mussolinisme. Mais il laissent entendre que Tagore a subi l'attrait de Mussolini, qui s'est montré avec lui simple et naturel. Eux-mêmes ne l'ont pas vu, ou n'ont eu avec les maîtres de l'Italie que des rapports officiels. Benedetto Croce est le seul Italien de marque qui soit venu voir Tagore.[19]

The day after, Tagore himself revealed his thoughts thus leaving his Swiss friends in a state of consternation:

> Tagore dit qu'il a beaucoup hésité à venir, à accepter l'invitation qui lui était faite. Ses premiers entretiens sur le fascisme ont été sur le bateau de l'Inde en Europe, avec le capitaine. Puis pendant tout son séjour en Italie, les conversations avec des amis ou notabilités de toutes sortes. Tous admiraient le fascisme, le disaient nécessaire, et, pour en mieux appuyer le caractère inévitable et sauveur, ils se dépréciaient eux-mêmes, ils dépréciaient toute l'Italie; ils la disaient incapable de se gouverner soi-même, de se maîtriser, de garder l'ordre et la paix. - Alors, Tagore en arrive à exprimer des théories, qui m'étonnent chez lui, pour

> légitimer le fascisme: si un peuple est réellement incapable de se diriger, s'il risque de succomber dans le chaos et la violence stérile, il faut admettre pour lui la nécessité d'une domination inflexible, qui supprime momentanément les libertés particulières au profit du bien général.[20]

Rolland let the Poet speak; it was difficult for him to interrupt Tagore's words. At the moment of the discussion, the poet did not face the whole situation but only passages here and there. Finally, it was Rolland's turn:

> [...] je parlerai au Poète, au nom de l'Italie bâillonnée, de l'Italie martyre. J'ai le message de ceux qui souffrent à lui faire entendre [...]. Je parle des députés que j'ai reçus de la jeunesse italienne, - de ces jeunes étudiants de Milan, abandonnés et trahis par leur maîtres, - de ce généreux Umberto Zanotti Bianco,[21] de ces idéalistes mazziniens, souffletés dans leur conscience, malades de honte et de douleur morale, - du sage Amendola,[22] assassiné, - de l'intègre Salvemini, exilé, et toujours sous la menace du poignard, - etc. Et je vois le visage de Tagore se contracter: car sa noble nature, infiniment sensible, ne peut supporter l'idée de la souffrance réelle et de l'outrage infligé à la personne humaine".[23]

After a tea-break, Tagore went on speaking. He said that India was not yet ready for self-government and the British domination was the lesser evil, and expressed his difference of views with Gandhi, who "dans l'affaire du Khilafat, n'a pas travaillé, comme il espérait, pour l'unité de l'Inde, mais pour l'orgueil et la force de l'Islam".[24]

In the evening Mahalanobis informed Rolland of the Italian trip and read to him his notes:

> Tagore a été magnifiquement - (outrageusement) - circonvenu. A son dernier voyage en Italie, (Milan et Veneto), il n'avait eu affaire qu'à des individus ou à des Sociétés indépendantes, nullement à l'Etat. Ses amis personnels, comme le duc Scotti, étaient antifascistes; et l'opinion, en Veneto, l'était aussi. Dans la presse fasciste, un courant

> hostile se manifestait franchement contre Tagore; et il ne lui eût prudent alors de prolonger ses conférences dans l'Italie du centre et à Rome. Il n'y eût certes point évite des scènes scandaleuses et des outrages".[25]

Then the Indian professor narrated the arrival at Santiniketan of Formichi and Tucci, "mussoliniens fervents, - et bien déterminés à prendre Tagore dans leurs filets, - de parfaits agents de la propagande fasciste". The poet, in Mahalanobis' words, "se rendit bien compte du danger; et jusqu'au dernier moment, il hésita à partir. Les deux compères italiens guettaient les circonstances". Mahalanobis explained that there was no seat for him on the Italian ship and that he reached Naples with another ship after the first meeting between Tagore and Mussolini. Hence he repeated what Formichi had said of the meeting. About Tagore's meeting Croce[26] professor Mahalanobis was very short: "Benedetto Croce est venu, ainsi, sur l'ordre de Maître [Mussolini]. Il est venu, et il s'est tu. Il n'a parlé avec Tagore que de choses de l'esprit. De son antifascisme, Tagore n'a rien su".

Tagore asked his friends for some days of meditation and agreed on answering some questions from Georges Duhamel, a French friend of Rolland's. On 30th June Tagore read to his friends his answer; actually he did not answer those questions but read them an article he had written previously. According to Rolland it was an article "conçu dans une forme vague et diffuse" with a flattering portrait of Mussolini:

> [...] l'énergie formidable du haut du visage, la douceur humaine du bas; il le compare à Alexandre et à Napoléon; et termine par quelques lignes où il préfère platoniquement à ces héros de l'action les héros de la pensée".[27]

The whole group was embarrassed, Duhamel was angry, Rolland regretted to have involved the French journalist and Tagore. The Poet promised to revise the article, but

according to Rolland it was not a problem of form but of substance. It would have been sufficient to tell the story of his meeting Croce; Mussolini and Formichi pretended to phone to Croce but they did not take any action. It was one of Croce's pupil who went to Naples and took the philosopher to Rome incognito, just in time to meet Tagore on the very day of his departure.

Actually, though reluctant, Mussolini ordered Formichi to send a telegram to Benedetto Croce, who received it in Naples in the late evening of 13th June and assured to be in Rome next day at 10 o'clock. The fact is that an Italian Army captain, Carmelo Rapicavoli, probably a pupil of the philosopher, went to Naples in the night between 13th and 14th June 1926 and took Croce to Rome to the Grand Hotel where the meeting took place, at the presence of Rapicavoli who acted as interpreter between the two.

There are three versions of their conversation, reported by Mahalanobis, Formichi and Rapicavoli, which are more or less identical, though the latter one seems the most complete. The main part dealt with the philosophical problem of the "being", which was faced in a too vague manner, probably due to the translation, not easy for two people belonging to different cultural worlds, who met for the first time, in difficult circumstances and in a hurry.[28]

On 4th July Tagore left for Zürich where on 8th he met Guglielmo Salvadori's wife, an English lady who told him of what had happened to her husband after writing an article critical of fascism in the "New Statesman" in 1924. From Zürich the Poet went to Vienna where he was called on by Angelica Babalanoff and by Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani,[29] counsel for the defence in Matteotti case.

The conclusion of the affair was that Tagore wrote from Vienna the 20th July letter which was published in the "Manchester Guardian" on 5th August, we have dealt with

previously.

A few years later, Tagore wa contacted by the French novelist Henry Barbusse, a pacifist who had got in 1916 the Goncourt prize for an anti-militarist work. He sent him an appeal "To the Free Spirits": "Under the name of Fascism we see everywhere crushed or threatened all the conquests of freedom, that had been achieved by centuries of sacrifices and strenuous efforts [...]. We can no longer remain silent in the presence of this bankruptcy of progress" - was the core of the problem. Along with it Barbusse sent Tagore a personal letter asking him for an answer to be used "in case of need by publishing it partly or in extracts". Tagore's answer was positive but uncommitting, probably mindful of what had occurred after his visit to Italy. In his letter he was sympathetic but he never mentioned Fascism or the like: "It is needless to say that your appeal has my sympathy, and I feel certain that it represents the voices of numerous others who are dismayed at the sudden outbursts of violence from the depth of civilisation" - was the opening - "I rejoice at the fact that there are individuals who still believe in a higher destiny of man, proving in their suffering the deathless life of the human soul ever ready to fight its own aberrations" - was the closing.[30]

The interest of the Italian press finished but not the interest of the Italian diplomats from the Embassies in Asia. They were constantly reporting to Mussolini who was also Foreign Minister.

On 7th January 1927 the Italian Vice-Consul in Calcutta, E. Benaglio, sent to Rome the summary of an interview from Tagore to the Bombay "Evening News of India" published on 24th December 1926 under the title of "Europe in turmoil". The Italian diplomat underlined Tagore's admiration for Mussolini's enterprises along his fear for the future of Italy when she will not be governed anymore by such a man.

Six months after, on 27th July the Italian Consul in Singapore, Luigi Neyrone, reported Tagore's visit to the governor Sir Hugh Clifford. During his staying in Singapore, in a private conversation with an Italian gentleman, Tagore recollected his visit to Rome, adding that unfortunately there was a "difference of views" between him and the head of the Italian government.

On 29th March 1930 an internal note of the Italian Foreign Ministry informed Mussolini and the Head of the Police of a probable arrival of Tagore to Rome according to the French press.

The Poet did not of course come to Italy, but he sent to Mussolini a letter from New York. Why did he write it? Perhaps in order to soften the situation? It is reported that in November 1930, back from Russia, Tagore met at New York Carlo Formichi, who was visiting professor there. During the conversation, Tagore expressed his intention to clarify any misunderstanding he had with Mussolini and Formichi suggested him to write a letter. We do not know whether the facts were such: we reproduce it because it was a noble letter which however remained undisclosed[31] and unanswered. The letter was recorded by Mussolini's secretariat under the arrival date of 10th December: an Italian translation of it was made for Mussolini, who read it and pencil-marked the second paragraph:

1172 Park Avenue, New York, Nov.21, 1930
Your Excellency

It often comes to my memory how we were startled by the magnanimous token of your sympathy reaching us through my very dear friend Professor Formichi. The precious gift, the library of Italian literature, is a treasure to us highly prized by our institution and for which we are deeply grateful to Your Excellency.

I am also personally indebted to you for the lavish

generosity you showed to me in your hospitality when I was your guest in Italy and I earnestly hope that the misunderstanding which has unfortunately caused a barrier between me and the great people you represent, the people for whom I have genuine love, will not remain permanent, and that this expression of my gratitude to you and your nation will be accepted. The politics of a country is its own, its culture belongs to all humanity. My mission is to acknowledge all that has eternal value in the self-expression of any country. Your Excellency has nobly offered to our institution in behalf of Italy the opportunity of a festival of spirit which will remain inexhaustible and ever claim our homage of a cordial admiration.

I am Your Excellency, gratefully yours,

Rabindranath Tagore

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Born in Naples in 1871, Carlo Formichi was a pupil of a famous indologist, Michele Kerbaker. He taught Sanskrit at the Universities of Bologna, Pisa, and Roma. A fervent supporter of Mussolini, Carlo Formichi was appointed member of the "Accademia d' Italia" in 1929 and later on Vice-President. He died in Roma in 1943.

[2] Viaggio verso l'Europa ideale. Tagore's speech at the Circolo Filologico, Milan, in "Corriere della Sera", Milano, 23 gennaio 1925, p.3.

[3] "Corriere della Sera", Milano, 3 febbraio 1925, p.4.

[4] Quoted by Krishna Kripalani, Rabindranath Tagore. A Biography, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, pp.319-320.

[5] Carlo Formichi, India e indiani, Milano, Alpes, 1929, pp.16-17.

[6] Ibidem, pp.26-27.

[7] On 21st October 1925 Mussolini sent professor Formichi a letter which was reproduced in the Italian original along with an English translation in "The Modem Review", Calcutta, XXXVIII, N.6, December 1925, p.729. It read: "Illustrious Professor, While I express my lively satisfaction to you on account of the invitation you have received from the Visvabharati University, an institution which honours in an Italian savant the Italian science and the University of Rome, I am glad to entrust you with the charge of bringing in my name as a gift to that Institution, which is the greatest centre of Indian culture, the books (of

which I enclose a list) with the wish that this offering may always render more and more intense the cultural relations between Italy and the classic land of India, the cradle of the civilization of the world".

[8] "The Modern Review", Calcutta, XXXVIII, N.6, December 1925, p.742.

[9] See note 5, p.269.

[10] Krishna Kripalani, quoted, p.327.

[11] "The Modem Review", Calcutta, XL, N.3, September 1926, p.339-340.

[12] Ibidem, p.341.

[13] Ibidem, pp. 343-344.

[14] According to Mario Prayer, Contributo alla biografia di Ravindranath Thakur: l'incontro con Benedetto Croce, in "Rivista degli Studi Orientali", Roma, LXV, (1991), p.59, the "seeker of peace" did not refer to Formichi, but to Roberto Assagioli, a Florentine psychotherapist, who was the second interpreter of Tagore in Rome when Formichi was not available.

[15] "The Manchester Guardian", 5 August 1926, pp.9-10.

[16] "Il Popolo d'Italia", Milano, 25 agosto 1926.

[17] "La Sera", Milano, 25 agosto 1926.

[18] Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957), a socialist, arrested and jailed after Matteotti's murder, emigrated to France from where he went to the United States in 1933; he taught history at the university of Harvard. In 1950 he returned to Italy and resumed his chair at the University of Florence. See his article Tagore e Mussolini, in Esperienze e studi socialist! in onore di Ugo Guido Mondolfo, edited by Critica Sociale, Firenze, 1957, pp.191-206.

[19] Romain Rolland, Inde. Journal 1915-1943, Paris, Editions Albin Michel, 1960, p.108.

[20] Ibidem, p.111.

[21] Umberto Zanotti Bianco (1889-1963) worked in favour of the oppressed people by editing a magazine "La Voce dei popoli".

[22] Giovanni Amendola (1882-1926), journalist of the "Corriere della Sera", member of the House in 1920-1922, founded a liberal-democratic party. After Mussolini's speech on 3rd January 1925, when a dictatorial regime was enforced, Amendola was attacked and badly injured by a fascist gang in July 1925: he expatriated to France where he died a few months after.

[23] R. Rolland, quoted, p.112.

[24] Ibidem , p.113.

[25] Ibidem, p.115.

[26] Benedetto Croce (18664952), the most representative of the philosophers of the 20th century, did not take any political action during fascism. Though he became the first president of the Italian

Liberal Party after the Second World War, he was more a writer than a politician.

[27] R. Rolland, quoted, p.140.

[28] M. Prayer, quoted, pp.61-68.

[29] Giuseppe Emanuele Modigliani (1872-1947), one of the founders of the Socialist Party in 1921, was compelled to expatriate to Austria after Matteotti's murder and to France later on.

[30] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Council Presidency, Fasc.20/15, N.13238.

CHAPTER III
IQBAL'S VISIT TO ITALY

The first contact of Muhammad Iqbal, the poet-philosopher and the voice of the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, with Italy was in 1905 during the crossing of the Mediterranean on his voyage from India to England. Seeing the coasts of Sicily from his ship, he composed one of the most touching poems "Siqilliya", which was later on included in the *Bang-i Dara* [The Call of the Caravan Bell] published in 1924.

"Siqilliya" is a mournful recollection of the past glories of the island during the Arab period; it appears to Iqbal as the tomb of the Arab civilization. Once – he says – the men of the desert ploughed the waves of the Mediterranean with their fast ships and the whole island re-echoed with their battle-cry *Allah u Akbar*. Now everything weeps in the world of Islam: Sa'di, the nightingale of Shiraz, weeps for Baghdad destroyed by Hulagu Khan in 1258; Dagh sheds tears for Delhi conquered by the British; Ibn Badrun laments Granada's fall into Christian hands; finally he himself does the same as he takes back to India a vision of Islamic decay.

It might seem that Iqbal despised the West: it was not so. When he published his lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, he cleared his point of view by saying that the world of Islam was moving towards the West and that European culture, on its intellectual side, was a further development of some phases of Islamic culture.

Let us go back to the poem "Siqilliya"; though the

vision of the island is a literary recollection, it contains Iqbal's considerations on the then political situation of Indian Muslims, which was the key subject of Iqbal's presidential speech in the Lahore session of the All Indian Muslim Conference on 21-22 March 1932. In that speech, famous for the idea of creating two separate areas in India for Hindus and Muslims, there is a significant passage in which Iqbal quoted Mussolini, certainly a linguistic and formal quotation, which however is, not without evidence, of his attraction towards Mussolini, even though on a personal level and not on the level of the ideas:

> Concentrate your ego on yourself alone, and ripen your clay into real manhood, if you wish to see your aspirations realized. Mussolini's maxim was "He who has steel has bread". I venture to modify it a bit and say: "He who is steel has everything". Be hard and work hard. This is the whole secret of individual an collective life. Our ideal is well defined. It is to win, in the coming constitution, a position for Islam which may bring her opportunities to fulfil her destiny in this Country.[1]

In September 1931 Iqbal had been to England as a Member of the Indian Muslim Delegation to the Second Round Table Conference. He was well-known in England where he had spent three years for higher studies from 1905 to 1908 and where some of his books had been printed or translated into English; as a man of politics he was known for his presidential address at the annual session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad on 29th December 1930 where he had advocated the creation of Pakistan:

> I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sindh and Beluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India.

On his way back home Iqbal stopped for a few days in

Rome on an official invitation from the "Accademia d'Italia". Generally all the visits of prominent men from India were officially organized by the "Accademia d'Italia" with the consent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which did not want to appear in the forefront for political reasons: practically the invitations came from the Government, i. e. from Mussolini himself.

On 27th November, at 15.45, the poet was received by Mussolini at Palazzo Venezia. The news of the visit was announced in many newspapers while the "Giornale d'Italia" published a long and well documented article *Sir Mohammed Igbal* [sic] *il poeta dell'Islam che è stato ricevuto all'Accademia d'Italia* [Sir Mohammed Iqbal, the poet of Islam who has been received at the Academy of Italy]:[2] it is worthwhile to give here an English translation of it in order to understand the official position of the fascist press towards the instances of Indian Muslims. No need to say that no articles of this kind could be published without the previous approval of the Italian authorities:

> The Muslim poet and leader, who has been received at the Royal Academy of Italy today, is one of the most eminent champions of that social, political and intellectual renaissance, which is a characteristic of all the Eastern countries, of India in particular.
> Religion and poetry are for him two sides of a same idea, two forms of a same object which is the freedom of man from formalism and from old and dead ideas: - Religion, not in the meaning of church or theology but in the meaning of personal revelation and in opposition to pure reason and purely intellectualistic constructions, that is a living idea which goes into practice and shapes it.

His ideas

When young, he got near to the Vedanta philosophy and to Sufism, but soon he left them. For him there is no universal life: he opposes to the absolute the finite centres of experience. The whole life is individual, God himself is an

individual, he is the supreme individual. All the individuals share in the nature of God. Not only does Man absorb the dominant matter, but he absorbs God himself in his ego, thus assimilating the divine attributes.

Immortality itself is to be conquered by man with his actions and granted by the graces of God: there are "egos" which disappear with death and others which win over death. Death is not the word which can be used for the latter ones; only the kind of their sensations and the level of their conscience change. These "egos" do not change world: they remain n this world but on a different level.

The essence of life s love which creates desires and ideals. Desires are good and bad depending on whether they strengthen or weaken the individual ego in this effort towards immortality. In a very beautiful poem in one of his first books he described this becoming man through love:

> When the world-illumining un rushed upon night like a brigand,
> My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.
> My tears washed away sleep from the eye of the narcissus,
> My passion wakened the grass and made it grow.
> [...]
> My being was as an unfinished statue,
> Uncomely, worthless, good-for-nothing.
> Love chiselled me: I became a man
> And gained knowledge of the nature of the universe.
> I have seen the movement of the sinews of the sky,
> And the blood coursing in the veins of the moon.[3]

These individualities find their accomplishment only in a society that is the ideal Muslim society, which is the kingdom of God on earth. It is a vision very far from the traditional Caliphate's and much more spiritual. The eye of the poet is to Hijaz from where he expects the true renaissance:

> The Hijaz' silence has proclaimed to the waiting ear at last

> The covenants established with desert's inhabitants will be re-affirmed.
> Which coming out of deserts had overturned the Roman Empire
> I have heard from the Qudsis that the same lion will be re-awakened.
> [...]
> O Western world's inhabitants, God's world is not a shop!
> What you are considering genuine, will be regarded counterfeit.
> Your civilization will commit suicide with its own dagger
> The nest built on the frail branch will not be durable.
> The caravan of the feeble ants will make fleet of rose petals
> However strong the ocean waves' tumult be it will cross the ocean.
> [...]
> As I told the turtledove one day the free of here are treading on dust!
> The buds started saying that I must be the knower of the garden's secrets![4]
>
> Lecture and poetry

He has explained these concepts in a more ample and clear way three years ago in his lectures collected under the title of "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam".

At the bottom of Iqbal's idea there is a belief that the western civilization is in decadence because of its incapacity of rising from the materialism in which it has fallen.

> Equipped with penetrative thought and fresh experience the world of Islam should courageously proceed to the work of reconstruction before them. This work of reconstruction, however, has a far more serious aspect than mere adjustment o modern conditions of life. The Great European War bringing in its wake the awakening of Turkey, the element of stability in the world of Islam [...] and the new economic experiment tried in the neighbourhood of Muslim Asia, must open our eyes to the inner meaning and destiny of Islam. Humanity needs three things today – a spiritual

> interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual, and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic systems on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed through pure reason is incapable of bringing that fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring. This is the reason why pure thought has so little influenced men, while religion has always elevated individuals, and transformed whole societies. The idealism of Europe never became a living factor in her life, and the result is a perverted ego seeking itself through mutually intolerant democracies whose sole function is to exploit the poor in the interest of the rich.[5]
>
> The supreme principles
>
> [For the Muslim] the spiritual basis of life is a matter of conviction for which even the least enlightened man among us can easily lay down his life, and in view of the basic idea of Islam that there can be no further revelation binding on man, we ought to be spiritually one of the most emancipated peoples on earth. Early Muslims emerging out of the spiritual slavery of pre-Islamic Asia were not in a position to realize the true significance of this basic idea. Let the Muslim of today appreciate his position, reconstruct his social life in the light of ultimate principles, and evolve, out of the hitherto partially revealed purpose of Islam, that spiritual democracy which is the ultimate aim of Islam.[6]

But this work of reconstruction is not to be expected from the masses but from individual men. The dialectic of history is based on the efforts of individual men.

> [...] the ultimate fate of a people dos not depend so much on organization as on the worth and power of individual men. [...] Thus a false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection constitute no remedy for a people's decay. 'The verdict of history' – as a modern writer has happily put it, 'is that worn-out ideas have never risen to power among a people who have worn them out'. The only effective power, therefore, that counteracts the forces of decay in a people is

> the rearing of self-concentrated individuals. Such individuals alone reveal the depth of life. They disclose new standards in the light of which we begin to see that our environment is not wholly inviolable and requires revision.[7]
>
> The greatness of fascism

These words explain the sympathetic interest of Iqbal in the fascism and the *Duce* whom he considers he has done, from the Islamic point of view, a work greater than Mustafa Kamal's, and from whose geniality he expects effects of large international importance in the future.

These words demonstrate he is far from the Russian Bolshevism of which he appreciates the spirit of revolt, rejecting however the materialism of its ideology:

> the Russian Bolshevism is like one of those instruments or those reactions produced by organisms and nature to get rid of the wastes of institutions and dead idea which are oppressive. Therefore, until now its value has been only negative.

Twenty-five years ago, when he came to Europe and his ship passed near Sicily, he wrote a poem very significant for us Italians. In the poet's soul there cried the memories and the glories of that island linked to the greatest period of the Arab civilization:

> Weep to thy heart's content, O blood-weeping eye!
> Yonder is visible the tomb of the Muslim culture,
> Once this place was alive with those dwellers of the desert,
> For whose ships the ocean was a playground;
> Who raised earthquakes in the palaces of the kings of kings,
> In whose swords were the nests of many lightning,
> Whose birth was death for the old world,
> Whose fear caused the palaces of error to tremble;
> Whose cry of *arise* gave life to a lifeless world
> And freedom to men from the chains of superstition.
> [...]
> Oh Sicily! The sea is honoured by you,
> You are a guide in the desert of these waters.

May the cheek of the ocean remain adorned by your beauty spot;
May the lamps comfort those who measure the seas;
May your view be ever light on the eyes of the traveller,
May waves ever dance on your rocks![8]

The Poet closes by asking the island to tell the story of that dead-for-ever past.

The last paragraph "The Greatness of Fascism" was inserted in order to show Iqbal's consent to the regime, by adjusting the relevant quotations from the poet's work to fit them in the context of the fascist propaganda.

The purpose of the visit to Mussolini is unknown; probably it was a courtesy call, but with a double interest: a personal admiration for the man by Iqbal, a political interest by Mussolini, who, as we know from other sources, was trying to develop his own personal policy towards India.

Iqbal was certainly impressed by the personality of Mussolini, without of course subscribing to the cult of Fascism: Italy made no secret of her anglophobia. Back to Lahore Iqbal wrote, some time after, two poems on Mussolini, which were published in 1935-1936.

The first poem appeared in the *Bal-i Jibril* [Gabriel's Wings] in January 1935: it was written before the Abyssinian war. It is favourable to Mussolini whom Iqbal saw a new force, able to re-awaken "the splendour of life in the eyes of the old and the burning desire in the hearts of the young"; he closed the poem by saying that "the guitar was just waiting for the artists' touch".

The second poem was written in the Shish Mahal of Bhopal on 22nd August 1935: it appeared in the *Zarb-i Kalim* [The Rod of Moses] in July 1936. Was there a change in Iqbal's mind between the writing of the poem and the time of its publication after the Abyssinian campaign and the proclamation of the empire on 9th May 1936? Apparently,

there was. The sub-title *Apne mashriqi aur maghribi harifun se* [to his rivals east and west] announces Mussolini's self-defence against the British who had not accepted the Ethiopian campaign. In the poem Mussolini lists all the crimes and outrages of the British which had been justified under the veil of civilization and gives a justification of his crimes:

> Under the pretext of civilization pillage and murder yesterday you did, today I do". These verses might appear as a defence of Mussolini by Iqbal, actually it is a criticism and a denouncement of the colonial and imperialistic policy disguised under the cloak of civilization in a cunning Machiavellian way. Four days before this poem Iqbal had written a poem on Abyssinia, the first two lines of which are very significant: "The vultures of Europe do not realize how poisonous is the carcass of Abyssinia.[9]

We do not know anything on the meeting between Mussolini and Iqbal; as a matter of fact we were not even sure that a meeting had taken place. There were only a statement by the Italian diplomat Pietro Quaroni who had met Iqbal in Lahore in 1936 and the recollections of Iqbal's son, Javed. Now we know from an official source that Iqbal was received by Mussolini.[10]

In what language was their conversation? Mussolini was not able to follow a conversation in English; Iqbal did not know Italian. However, we do not think that the conversation was a long one as it was scheduled for a span of only ten minutes.

According to a recent book[11] which, unfortunately, does not provide sufficient sources, there are two versions of Iqbal's visit:

One statement is attributed to Mehr,[12] who was with Iqbal in Rome, but did not accompany Iqbal to the meeting. Instead of Mehr, it was Dr. Sakarpa [a misprint for Scarpa], Italy's Consul General in Bombay, who sat in the meeting as

an interpreter. Iqbal was received cordially, but the meeting was rather brief. They talked about Iqbal's works, and then in the course of discussion on political issues Mussolini suggested to Iqbal to visit Libya at his expense, and examine whatever was being accomplished for the welfare of the Libyan people. Mussolini wanted from Iqbal a memorandum of his observations, as well as his recommendations for the future development of Libya. Iqbal, however, expressed his inability to undertake this assignment since he was exceptionally busy back home. According to Mehr: that was all that was to it.

The second version of this visit is given by Sir Malcom Darling, who had a meeting with Iqbal in Lahore in 1934. According to Darling, Iqbal talked about his meeting with Mussolini and said: "The meeting took place in a very large hall, which was his office [Palazzo Venezia]. At the one end of the hall on a raised platform was a large desk, and behind was an ornate extensive chair, which Mussolini occupied. Naturally Iqbal had to walk a considerable distance to get close to Mussolini's desk. While Iqbal was walking he paid no attention to Iqbal with his gaze fixed upon his papers. When Iqbal came close to his desk, Mussolini stood up and cordially shook him by the hand. The meeting lasted for about forty minutes.

Mussolini was curious to know Iqbal's impressions of the Italian people Iqbal was reluctant to offer any comments, but then said: "Italians are very much like the Iranians. They are attractive, good looking, lovers of art and very sensitive and intelligent. The magnificent part of their civilization and culture includes many centuries, but they lack blood". Mussolini was surprised to hear the last assessment, and asked Iqbal to explain further. Iqbal said: "Iranians have one advantage, which is not available to the Italians. Surrounded by healthy and strong nations like Turks, Afghans and the Kurdis Iranian blood is constantly

replenished; but Italians have no such possibility".

Mussolini asked: "What should Italians do?" Iqbal said: "Turn away from Europe; and look toward the East. European culture is declining, while the air of the East s fresh, in which you should learn to breathe". Subsequently, Mussolini wrote a letter to Iqbal and asked him what could he do to win over the good will of the Muslim population, which was settled in Italy. Iqbal replied: "A mosque should be built in Rome, and arrange a conference of the *ulama* in Salerno, because Muslims view Salerno as an ancient Muslim city".

After this appointment Iqbal was surrounded by the media representatives. One of them asked Iqbal: "What do you think of *Il Duce*?" Iqbal stated: "I am reluctant to express my views because they may not be liked by the Pope". But the journalists persisted in this question. Finally Iqbal gave in and said; "Your *Il Duce* is another Luther, but is without a Bible".

The third version of Iqbal's visit to Mussolini is stated by Faqir Sayyid Wahid-ud-din: "Iqbal met Mussolini, and I have heard the story of what transpired straight from Iqbal's mouth. Iqbal did not express any desire to visit Mussolini. When Iqbal was staying in Rome Mussolini sent an aide to Iqbal to convey his invitation to Iqbal. Dr. Sahib accepted the invitation, and went to meet him in his office. Sitting behind a desk in a large hall of an office, he stood up to receive Dr. Iqbal. He was not a man of tall stature, but was barrel-chested and his arms were thick and heavy. Like the eyes of an eagle his eyes radiated a sparkle".

After the exchange of preliminary courtesies, he asked Iqbal: "What do you think of our Fascist Movement?" Iqbal said: "You have adopted for the national life a dimension of discipline, which is very essential in the Islamic perspective. If you were to adopt all of Islam you would be able to subue

all of Europe". Iqbal also advised Mussolini to divert his attention from Europe, implying that you should avoid the cultural values of Europe.

Mussolini asked Iqbal: "How could I win the moral support of the Muslim world?" Iqbal replied: "Invite young Muslim students in large number to study in Italy, and give them free education with free room and board". Mussolini then asked for a wise council. Iqbal stated: "Do not let your cities' population exceed the specified limit". Perplexed by this comment, Mussolini called for an explanation. Iqbal added: "As the city population increases, its cultural and economic vitality declines, and then the cultural vitality is replaced by evil of all kinds". Iqbal paused for a moment, and then added: "This is not my personal view. Thirteen hundred of years ago our Prophet had given this wise council about the city of Medina that when its population exceeded a certain limit the excessive population should be settled in a new city". The moment Mussolini heard the Prophet Muhammad's policy statement, he jumped to his feet, stood erect and thumped the desk with his two hands, and exclaimed: "This is indeed an extraordinary thought."[13]

It is exceptionally difficult to determine which version is accurate. However, it cannot be denied that Iqbal was impressed with Mussolini's personality. In a letter of March 12, 1937 Iqbal described his impressions of Mussolini: "Whatever I have written about Mussolini, in your assessment it is filled with contradictions. You are right in your judgment. If this God's creature contains the qualities of a saint and a devil, then how can I deal with it? If you were ever to meet Mussolini you would corroborate my statement that his eyes are so bright that they are beyond description. You cam compare their sparkle only with the rays of the sun. At least that is how I felt about them".[14]

The final of this intriguing story took place in 1936. Iqbal accepted to receive the Italian diplomat Pietro

Quaroni, who had stopped in Lahore on his way to Kabul where he had been posted as Minister Plenipotentiary at the head of the Italian Legation. Quaroni related his conversation with the poet-philosopher in the most widely-circulated Italian newspaper "Corriere della Sera" twenty years later.[15] Here are the relevant parts:

We spoke of the position of Italy with regard to Islam. It was the time of the first theories about the sword of Islam and the defender of Islam. It was not easy to explain our ideas which were too vague. Besides it was not easy to speak to speak to Muhammad Iqbal: he did no say a single word. He looked at me through his half-closed eyelids, he bent towards me as if to listen to me in a better way, but I perceived his refusal. I was trying to guess his hardness, if there was any.

Suddenly he asked me: "When are you going to build a mosque in Rome?"

I tried to explain, but it was even less easy than before.

> Well, why do you send your missionaries to our country? Why do you compel us to accept your churches? You all are catholic, you think that you religion is the only true one, you try to convert us. It is your right. I too am convinced that my religion is the only true and try to convert those who do not believe in it. But if you want to be friends or protectors of Islam, if you want us to trust in you, then you must begin by respecting us, and by demonstrating that you think our religion is as good as yours. And then, logically, you should stop sending your missionaries, and there are no reasons why a beautiful mosque should not be built in Rome, precisely in Rome. We too know and appreciate logic, the same logic of yours, the Aristotelian logic, do not forget it.

It was impossible to say that he was wrong. I tried to change the subject unsuccessfully, the conversation was always political.

It was 1936 and the proclamation of the Italian empire was a recent event. It was not easy to defend our campaign in the eyes of people who were struggling to get free of a foreign domination. It is strange how many subjects look excellent when one thinks of them at a table and sound useless when one is in front of human beings.

"Do you understand what I say when I speak of Rum?" -asked me.

"Well, can you explain to me why Italy wants to become Rum again? If Italy is Italy, though a catholic country, there are no reasons not to get on well. But if Italy wants to become Rum again, then it is better not to cherish false hopes: the whole world of Islam will be against her, just at the time of the old Rum".

Was it a warning, a threat? I do not know. His tone was very kind, his voice calm and peaceful: a kind light was in the deep of his eyes, but there was in the tone of his voice something hard, almost unmerciful.

"We want to get rid of the British" - went on Iqbal, as if following his thoughts - "but not to put someone else in their place. As a matter of fact, to tell the truth, we prefer to get our freedom by ourselves".

Let us concentrate now with Iqbal's speech at the "Accademia d'Italia". The brief notice in the press said only that the poet had spoken on "an ethical and religious subject". Most probably Iqbal did not write any paper, of which there is no evidence, but spoke according to the following notes prepared in advance:

A - The most remarkable event of Modern History: movement of Islam towards the West and movement of Russia towards the East. On a proper understanding of these movements depends our understanding of: (i) the likely fate of modern civilization; (ii) the relation of England with the

world of Islam on its moral and political and economic aspect.

B - Let us try to understand them. There are three forces that are shaping the world of today:

(1) Western civilization. Its formation: (a) Scientific method and mastery over nature - Islam and Scientific mehod (Briffault); (b) Separation of Church and State; development of the Ethical tone of Western civilization and development of territorial nationalism ending in 1914.

(2) Communism. Karl Marx and Hegel; Negation of Church: Ascendancy of materialism as Philosophy of life.

(3) Islam [*There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger,* in Arabic]. Its present decay and various views; germs of greatness. Its method of personal illumination on the one hand and social experiment on the other hand. As a method of personal illumination: revolves round the ego. Mysticism. Not proximity but Power: [*Truly he succeeds that purifies it (soul); and he falls that corrupts it,* in Arabic]. As a social experiment. Last Sermon. Idea of humanity: (i) the abolition of blood relationship as a principle of social solidarity; man not earth-rooted; the movement of prophets; (ii) congregational prayer and institutions; (iii) socialism.

C - But there can be no denying that Islam has lost its hold on matter. It is moving towards the West. It is no decay but reawakening; it is search for power. The first realization of it came in 1799. Tippu and Navarino [Iqbal erred about the date; the battle of Navarino between Turks and Europeans took place in 1827]. Since then various movements appeared: Wahabism, Babism, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. The movement of Islam towards the West means regaining of that hold. England and Islam. Atheistic Materialism and Islam.

D - England and Islam. Political and economic aspect.

Islam suspicious; letter from Morocco. In order to win Islam she must be trusted.

1. India, N. W. India; the organization of Islam.
2. Palestine, Arabia, etc. The Arab world. Kashmir.
3. The friendship of Islam worth having.[16]

The very first note (A) is a clear proof of Allama Iqbal's wish to have a dialogue with Europe: it is based on what he had written in his first lecture dealing with "Knowledge and Religious Experience":

> During the last five hundred years religious thought in Islam has been practically stationary. There was a time when European thought received inspiration from the world of Islam. The most remarkable phenomenon of Modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the world of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture.[17]

The last note (E), that is "The friendship of Islam worth having", dealt with a problem in which other "isms", such as Fascism, Nazism, Francoism, in Italy, Germany and Spain respectively, were in favour of Islam but only because of their own political interests. Iqbal's sympathetic interest for Fascism and Mussolini was considered in those years as a support of these regimes; on the contrary Iqbal, who had accepted to meet Mussolini and to speak in Rome in the highest place of the Italian intelligentsia, the "Accademia d'Italia", wanted to understand the role played by Italy in Europe.

A demonstration of Iqbal's interest is a reply-letter to a query from Reyaz al-Hasan,[18] then a student of post-graduate classes in Economics in the Allahabad University.

Presumably in May 1933, Reyaz al-Hasan who had taken up the study of Economic Theory of Islam had asked the poet for help. Here is his reply from Lahore on 29th May 1933:

I am extremely sorry I have no time to read your essay. But I would suggest that you should make a careful study of the ideas of Mussolini. The essence of Islamic Economics is to render the growth of large capitals impossible. Mussolini and Hitler think in the same way. Bolshevism has one to the extreme of abolishing capitalism altogether. In all aspects of life Islam always takes the middle course. Says the *Quran* (II, 143): "And thus We have made you an exalted nation that you may be the bearer of witness to the people and [that] the Messenger may be a bearer of witness to you".

The subject of the *shari'ah* of Islam is only a recent discovery in Europe. Its importance is likely to attract the attention of European scholars. Indeed some German scholars have already begun to work at it. You may also read with advantage a book called the *Sociology of Islam*. I forget the name of the author [Reuben Levy of University of London].[19]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Quoted from S. A. Vahid, *Introduction to Iqbal*, Karachi, Pakistan Publications, no date [1960?], p.47.

[2] The article was exhaustive with quotations from Persian, Urdu and English into Italian. I suspect it was written by a Muslim Indian student in Rome, perhaps Reyaz al-Hasan (see note 18) though some dates do not coincide.

[3] *The Secret of the Self* [Asrar-i Khudi], in Persian, published at Lahore in 1915. See translation by Reynold A. Nicholson, London, Macmillan, 1920, "The Prologue", vv.1-4, 151-156.

[4] Ghazal "March 1907" from *The Call of the Caravan Bell* [Bang-i Dara], in Urdu, published at Lahore in 1924. See translation by M. A. K. Khalil, Lahore, Tayyab Iqbal Printers, 1997, vv.7-10, 14-19, 24-25.

[5] *The Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, Lahore, Institute of Islamic Culture, 2006, p.142 (from the lecture "The Principle of Movement in the Structure of

Islam").
[6] Ibidem, p.142.
[7] Ibidem, p.120.
[8] "Sicily" from *The Call of the Caravan Bell*, translation by Umrao Singh Sher Gil, revised by the editors of "Iqbal Collected Poetical Works (English Translation)", edited by Muhammad Suheyl Umar, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, on-line, p.169, vv.1-10, 13-18.
[9] Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i Iqbal. Urdu*, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1991.
[10] The official source is in Mussolini's papers, the Visitors' Book, where under the date of Friday, 27th November 1931, one can read in Italian: "Udienze di Venerdì 27 novembre 1931 – X: Palazzo Venezia, ore 15.45 Sir Mohamed Iqbal, grande poeta mussulmano". [Time 15.45 Sir Mohamed Iqbal, great Muslim Poet]. See "Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio Ordinario. Udienze" b. 3107.
[11] Hafeez Malik, *Iqbal in Politics*, Lahore, Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2009, pp.215-218.
[12] Ghulam Rasul Mehr (1895-died after 1947), journalist and writer, was with Iqbal during his travel in Europe in 1931.
[13] Faqir Sayyid Wahd-ud-Din, *Ruzqar-i Faqir*, vol.I, pp.48-49.
[14] Shaikh Ata Allah, *Iqbal Nama*, vol.II, p.314.
[15] Pietro Quaroni, *Ricordi di un ambasciatore. Un poeta difficile*, in "Corriere della Sera", Milano, 11 febbraio 1956, re-printed in *Il mondo di un ambasciatore*, Milano, Ferro Edizioni, 1965, pp.106-112.
[16] "Notes of lecture delivered in Roma and Egypt" from the original in Iqbal's own hand, reported in Khurram Ali Shafique, *Iqbal. An Illustrated Biography*, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2006, p.157.
[17] Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, edited and annotated by M. Saeed Sheikh, Lahore, Institute of Islamic Culture, 2006, p.6.
[18] Reyaz al-Hasan, an Indian Muslim student who got a Ph. D. in Italian literature in Rome in 1934. After retiring from Pakistan Foreign Service in the Sixties, Reyaz al-Hasan worked as Sub-editor of the Karachi daily "Morning News". In 1940 he had been given the task of writing a long article on the life and work of Iqbal, *Il poeta musulmano indiano Mohammed Iqbal (1873-1938)*, in "Oriente Moderno", Roma, XX, 1940, pp.605-623.
[19] *Letters of Iqbal*, compiled and edited by Bashir Ahmad Dar, Lahore, Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2005, pp.209-210.

CHAPTER IV
GANDHI'S VISIT TO ITALY

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma, came to Italy a few days after Iqbal. Released from jail on 25th January 1931, the Mahatma left Bombay on next 29th August bound to London where he arrived on 12th September. He had gone to England, like Iqbal, to attend the Second Round Table Conference; he was accompanied by his son Devadas, his two secretaries Mahadev Desai and Nayar Pyarelal, and his faithful follower Mirabehn, actually Miss Madeleine Slade, an English woman who had been living for years in India. The Conference, which ended on the first days of December, was a failure.

On his way back to India on 5th December, the Mahatma stopped at Paris, and on 6th morning he proceeded for Switzerland to meet Romain Rolland at Villeneuve; his staying there from 6th to 10th was very fruitful, as we can see later on. On 11th December he left for Rome via Milan, and on 14th morning he boarded a ship at Brindisi, bound to Bombay where he arrived on 28th December.

The first idea of inviting Gandhi to visit Italy is ascribed to the Italian Consul General in Calcutta, Gino Scarpa, a sort of *longa manus* of Mussolini in the Indian sub-continent. Scarpa, who had been a socialist in 1913, had entered the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce (later, National Economy) after the First World War: in 1923 (or 1924) he was sent to Bombay with commercial assignments. In 1928 he joined the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and was sent Consul to Colombo, Ceylon (present Sri Lanka) and from 1929 to 1932 to Calcutta as Consul General. Since his arrival to India he had created his own commercial and political network, being acquainted with many members of the Indian Congress, in particular with Gandhi's secretary Mahadev Desai.

Scarpa, who was greatly in favour of Gandhi's nationalism, had sent in April 1930 a telegram to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underlying two facts: the favourable acceptance by the Indian press of a Vatican report concerning the role played by Gandhi and a press report by the Jesuits in India in favour of the nationalist movement. In the same period Gino Scarpa had published a book *L'India dove va?*, we have dealt with in our Introduction, in which he had expressed his own points of view on the matter, of course in agreement with the Government.

As soon as the rumour of Gandhi's visit to Europe was spread in June 1931, Scarpa started thinking of a visit of the Mahatma to Rome. However, he was aware of the difficulties since the Ministry, as with the case of Iqbal, was worried of the English reactions. Besides he knew that important Italian persons, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dino Grandi and the philosopher of the regime Giovanni Gentile, were pro-British and did not intend to create misunderstandings with the English. Consul Scarpa went on with his project, probably through a friend of his, Ghanshyam Das Birla, who wrote to Gandhi about the invitation; the proof is a letter of the Mahatma to G. D. Birla, on 26th July, stating:

Please thank the Italian Consul for the very kind offer made in connection with the probable visit by Malaviyaji[1] and myself to Rome. Nothing is certain with reference to my visit to London and even f I succeed in going there I do not know that I shall be able to visit Italy on my return. On

going to London there is no possibility of my visiting Rome. I believe the same thing applies to Malaviyaji.[2]

Actually the Mahatma had excluded any visits to Italy: also his attending the Round Table Conference was uncertain due to the unfavourable relations between the Indian National Congress and the British authorities in India in that period. Only at the end of August did Gandhi decide to attend the London Conference after a meeting with the Viceroy in Simla; on 26th August a press release announced it:

> Mr. Gandhi had three hours' satisfactory talk with the Viceroy at the end of which he informed the Associated Press that he would be sailing from Bombay on 29th instant.[3]

The Mahatma must have taken a decision when in London. In autumn 1931 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to Gentile that "Gandhi's position in the eyes of the English government does not allow us to receive him officially, though he might be invited by a cultural institution".[4]

To prepare a favourable ground for the visit, it was thought of an *escamotage*: Gandhi would be invited by the "Accademia d'Italia" and not by the Ministry. In this way no objection would be raised; the Italian ambassador to London, agreed upon it, writing on 12th October 1931 to the Ministry:

There is no objection to the invitation of Gandhi and other Indian personalities by the "Accademia d'Italia" or similar institutions.[5]

No meeting between Gandhi and Mussolini was talked of. Nothing was said in a letter to Gino Scarpa from the Mahatma's secretary Mahadev Desai:

He [Gandhi] would be quite agreeable to address the students under the auspices of the Milan and the Rome

universities on the spiritual message of non violence or some such thing. But here too he would be agreeable to whatever you may desire. But you please avoid more than one lecture, for he is exhausted and weak. You can get him to meet as many public-men as you like of course.[6]

Actually it was followed the same procedure used for Iqbal. A month before Gandhi's arrival to Italy, the Ministry was still of the idea of "an invitation by the Institute for Fascist Culture or by the University of Rome"; as a matter of fact, a sympathetic attitude to Gandhi at official level cannot be denied. Gentile himself, who had written a preface to the Italian edition of Gandhi's biography which appeared at the end of 1931,[7] was very cautious and had sent Gandhi a diplomatic telegram saying he was sorry that during his scheduled staying in Roma he could not meet him as he was out of town. Actually Gentile had invited Gandhi to speak in Rome at the Istituto Nazionale di Cultura Fascista; the telegram, dated 4th December 1931, addressed to Desai read:

> Please ask Mahatma whether passing through Rome would like accept invitation Istituto Nazionale Fascista Cultura addresses through me to call at Istituto and speak select audience stop. Please moreover advise date arrival stop. Best regards. President Senator Gentile.[8]

The answer was astonishing:

> Thanks. Gandhiji will gladly address if you have no objection is freely criticism Fascism stop. If agreeable we can reach Rome Saturday morning eight thirty wire Mahadev Desai.[9]

Hence the diplomatic telegram from Gentile's office, saying that the Senator was out of Rome until next Monday.

However, the Consul General Gino Scarpa went on with his underground work in order to arrange for Gandhi's visit and for his meeting Mussolini.

Gandhi's visit to Roma was at last scheduled for 12-13th December 1931. Before reaching Rome, the Mahatma had been a guest of Romain Rolland, who wrote a long report in his *Inde. Journal (1915-1943)*. Rolland[10] informed Gandhi of the moral and social situation in Europe after the First World War and of the danger of an impending, more devastating war. Then he discussed of the methods to prevent it: violence or non-violence? Finally he prospected to Gandhi the dangers of his visit to Italy and reminded him of the consequences of Tagore's visit. In Italy he would be in the hands of the Fascists and would be surrounded by journalists, high officials and government spies, all of them interested in exploiting him: whatever he would do or say would be reported in a distorted way. On Tuesday 8th December Rolland and Gandhi discussed the problem of Italy. Gandhi told him he had been invited through the good offices of consul Scarpa and would be interested in meeting Mussolini:

> I wish to go and to meet Mussolini. I wish to meet people, to bring them my mission of peace [...] I wish to meet the Pope who sent me a good message [...] Scarpa [...] assured me that my visit is private, non-official, arranged by himself [...] About Mussolini, I do not think he wants to see me, but if he wants, I will do without any hesitation.[11]

Rolland asked Gandhi to re-consider his purpose: any meeting with official representatives would appear as a support of the regime. He suggested to meet only the Pope and to speak only at the presence of foreign journalists and his own faithful people, such as Desai and Mirabehn. When Rolland realized that Gandhi intended to visit Italy, he asked him not to accept the invitation of Countess Carnevale,[12] a pro-regime lady, but to stay at the Rome residence of general Moris[13] whom he considered a trusty-worth gentleman.

The Mahatma reached Rome on 12th December early

morning. The first surprise came from the Vatican: the Pope regretted he could not meet Gandhi because time was short. However, Gandhi visited some halls of the Museum and the Sistina Chapel. At 6 p.m. he was received by Mussolini at Palazzo Venezia, along with Desai, Mirabehn and Moris; no official reports were issued of the twenty-minute meeting except what published in newspapers, i. e. two lines saying: "The Head of the Government has received at Palazzo Venezia the 'Mahatma' Gandhi who had expressed the wish to meet him on the occasion of his voyage to Rome. The visit lasted about twenty minutes".[14]

Why this change of attitude? It was said that the visit to Mussolini was a private one: what difference was there between a private visit and an official visit? The fact is only one: Gandhi met Mussolini. Did have any meaning the fact that Gandhi had not been received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dino Grandi? Was it possible that a fascist diplomat such as Scarpa could organize the meeting without the support of his Ministry? Or probably Mussolini had changed his mind at the last moment. Many years after, in 1959, Scarpa wrote that on the day of Gandhi's arrival he was told not to go to the station and not to contact Gandhi in any case; but a few hours after, the Ministry changed mind and ordered him to accompany the Mahatma.[15]

Of course there are no reports of the meeting; only some passing words. For example Rolland reported something Gandhi wrote him in a letter:

> On the whole he does not look a very understanding person, but he has been charming with me; and when I told him that the Pope could not receive me, his eyes flashed with mischievous satisfaction.[16]

More extensive and informative was Gandhi's thought about Mussolini and Fascism in a letter written to Rolland on 20th December from aboard the ship in his voyage back to India:

> Mussolini is a riddle to me. Many of his reforms attract me. He seems to have done much for the peasant class. I admit an iron hand is there. But as violence is the basis of Western society, Mussolini's reforms deserve an impartial study. His care of the poor, his opposition to super-urbanization, his efforts to bring about co-ordination between capital and labour, seem to me to demand special attention [...] My own fundamental objection is that these reforms are compulsory. But it is the same in all democratic institutions. What strikes me is that behind Mussolini's implacability is a desire to serve his people. Even behind his emphatic speeches there is a nucleus of sincerity and of passionate love for his people. It also seems to me that the majority of Italian people love the iron government of Mussolini.[17]

It was a very clear and lucid examination of the situation: the Mahatma had caught the real situation of Italy and the contradictions of a dictatorial regime with its advantages and disadvantages.

However what Mussolini and Gandhi may have said in their short meeting was unimportant; from the various known sources, mostly oral, the talk seemed not to have had any political relevance.[18] The only interesting report was written by Mahadev Desai, under the form of personal notes in Gujarati,[19] which were never disclosed. From it we know that Mussolini's main questions concerned: the Round Table Conference, the economical situation in India, Gandhi's program, the Hindu-Muslim problem, the independence of India and the form of government, the situation in Europe. Gandhi's answers were short and uncompromising; neither Mussolini nor Gandhi spoke about the Italian political situation.

Of some relevance would have probably been the letter Gandhi wrote to Mussolini from aboard the ship on 21st December, if this letter could had been traced.[20]

The importance was only the fact of their meeting: for

Mussolini it was the affirmation of his personal policy and a sort of warning to Britain, for Gandhi it was a sort of personal satisfaction and maybe an innocent demonstration of his leadership, a kind of message to the Indian nationalists then divided between the use of violent or non-violent means of struggle.

More relevant and provoking was the so-called interview, which was published in the Rome newspaper "Giornale d'Italia" on 15th December. Most probably it was a bogus. Virginio Gayda, the director of the newspaper, a man close to the government, in particular to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that the interview was granted to him by the Mahatma. Gandhi and his people denied it. Gayda, whose fluency in English is not known, must have picked up pieces of conversations at a gathering at Countess Carnevale's house in Rome and must have joined them, adding his own opinions and making up an interview. Probably there was also some connivance by government quarters in order to create embarrassment in the Italian relations with Britain. In fact this so-called interview was re-published by other Italian newspapers with great propaganda; we must not forget that the press was government-controlled and some orders from above must have been given to publicize this so-called interview.

In the article it was said that Gandhi considered the Round Table Conference in London a failure and that he intended to increase his fight against the British Government and to boycott English goods. These words, reprinted in "The Times", caused a great stir in England, and Samuel Hoare,[21] Secretary of State for India, asked Gandhi for an explanation.

According to "The Times" report, the cable sent to Gandhi was as follows:

Press reports state, on embarkation, you issued to

"Giornale d'Italia" a statement which contains expressions such as following:

(1) Round Table Conference marked definite rupture of relations between India nation and British Government.
(2) You are returning to India in order to restart at once struggle against England.
(3) Boycott would now prove powerful means of rendering more acute British crisis.
(4) We will not pay taxes, we will not work for England in any way, we will completely isolate British authorities, their politics and their institutions, and we will totally boycott all British goods.

Some of your friends here think you must have been misreported and, if so, denial desirable.[22]

Needless to say that Gandhi answered he had never given any interview while in Italy; from Port Said Gandhi answered on 17th December:

> Giornale d'Italia" statement wholly false. Never gave any interview pressmen Rome. Last interview I gave was to Reuter Villeneuve where I asked people India not come hasty decision but await my statement.[23]

Notwithstanding Gandhi's disclaimer, Virginio Gayda persisted in his claim that the interview was genuine.

The result, however, was that back to India, Gandhi was arrested. The cause was not surely the interview; anyhow it contributed to his arrest and jail.[24] To make things worse was also his speech at the Welfare of India League, at Bombay, on his arrival. To the question: "If you were in power, would you allow another organization to run a parallel Government and usurp your place?", Gandhi answered:

> When I said that I did not see any harm in organizations running parallel Governments, I did not mean usurpation. My friend has put a word into my mouth which I never used. If these organizations run a parallel Government for

> the good of the people, I would certainly give them all encouragement. See what Dictator Mussolini is doing in Italy. He never interferes with voluntary activities for the betterment of the country.[25]

The problem of the interview must have been important if Gandhi felt obliged to send to Samuel Hoare a new detailed report of the facts, three years after, on 6th March 1934.[26]

Gandhi started his letter by saying that "an English friend, Prof. Maclean of Wilson College, Bombay, had thought that, although the matter was stale, it was worthwhile my clearing up, as the denial by the Rome journalist had created a profound impression at the time of its publication and had probably precipitated the Viceregal action against me in 1932".

After summarizing the main points of the so-called interview, based on three cuttings from newspapers[27] he had seen for the first time after being released from jail, Gandhi stated:

1. I never made any statement, much less a long one to Signor Gayda.
2. I was never invited to meet Signor Gayda at any place. But I was invited by an Italian friend [Consul Scarpa][28] to meet some Italian citizens at an informal drawing-room meeting at a private house [Countess Carnevale]. At this meeting I was introduced to several friends whose names I cannot now recall and could not have recalled even the day after the meeting. The introductions were merely formal.
3. At this meeting the conversation was general, and not addressed to any particular individual. Questions were put by several friends and there was a random conversation as at all drawing-room meetings.
4. It was therefore wrong for Signor Gayda or "The Times" correspondent to reproduce my remarks as if

they were one connected statement to one particular person.

5. Signor Gayda never showed to me for verification anything he might have taken down.
6. The conversation, among other things, referred to the Round Table Conference, my impression of it and my possible further action [...].
7. I never said that I was returning to India in order to restart the struggle against England [...].

Nehru himself mentioned this interview and its effects when he spoke of Mussolini's invitation to him in 1936 and his denial to accept it:

> [...] the Abyssinian campaign was being carried on then and my meeting him would inevitably lead to all manner of inferences, and was bound to be used for fascist propaganda. No denial from me would go far. I knew of several recent instances when Indian students and others visiting Italy had been utilized, against their wishes and sometimes even without their knowledge, for fascist propaganda. And then there had been the bogus interview with Mr. Gandhi which the "Giornale d'Italia" had published in 1931.[29]

To conclude this chapter of the visit, the position of Consul General Scarpa in the arrangement of Gandhi's visit was emphasized by Gandhi himself in a letter to him from Bombay on 3rd January 1932:

> Just a line, whilst I am yet free, to thank you for your kindness during my all too brief stay in beautiful and historic Rome. I wish I had two months instead of only two days. Please tell the [Lloyd] Triestino Agent with my thanks that the Commander and the officers of s.s. *Pilsna* made me and my party thoroughly comfortable.[30]

The problem of Mussolini was faced accidentally in May 1938 after the Abyssinian conquest. Gandhi, who was touring in the North-West Frontier Province, was asked to say his opinion from the non-violence point of view. The

Mahatma gave an answer in conformity with his credo, but unconvincing on a practical level:

> Non-violence is the activest [sic] force on earth, and it is my conviction that it never fails. But if the Abyssinians had adopted the attitude of non-violence of the strong, i. e. the non-violence which breaks to pieces but never bends, Mussolini would have had no interest in Abyssinia. Thus if they had simply said: 'You are welcome to reduce us to dust or ashes but you will not find one Abyssinian ready to cooperate with you', what would Mussolini have done? He did not want a desert. Mussolini wanted submission and not defiance, and if he had met with the quiet, dignified and non-violent defiance that I have described, he would certainly have been obliged to retire. Of course it is open to anyone to say that human nature has not been known to rise to such heights. But if we have made unexpected progress in physical sciences, why may we do less in the science of soul?[31]

For the sake of information, it is interesting to record two very little-known open letters written by Gandhi to Hitler and Mussolini during the war, which were suppressed by the British Government in India. They are typical of Gandhi's personality, though he himself realized the usefulness of them. The two letters are dated 23rd July 1939 and 24th December 1940; they were both addressed to Hitler and dealt with the problem of the unjustness of any war. The fault of the war - thought Gandhi - was only of their leaders: "neither the Englishmen and Germans nor the Italians know what they are fighting for except that they trust their leaders and therefore follow them". The second letter ends by saying:

> I had intended to address a joint appeal to you and Signor Mussolini, whom I had the privilege of meeting when I was in Rome during my visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. I hope that he will take this as addressed to him also with the necessary changes.[32]

It is difficult to say whether the Mahatma hoped in a

positive answer; was he so simple minded? Not at all; most probably his intention was to publicize in Europe the technique of non-violent resistance since he was aware that it was little understood in the West, especially in its positive and reconciling sense, and for that reason, apart from any other, his appeals had not met with any wide response.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Pundit Malaviya (1861-1946), Chancellor of the Hindu University of Benares, President of the Indian National Congress in 1909 and 1918.
[2] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, vol.53 (2 July 1931-12 October 1931), p.130.
[3] Ibidem, p.279.
[4] ASMAE, A.P. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Historical Archives, Political Affairs), India, file 1.
[5] Ibidem.
[6] Gino Scarpa, *L'Asia e il mondo occidentale*, Roma, Universale di Roma Editrice, 1959, p.39.
[7] *Mahatma Gandhi, Autobiografia*, a cura di C. F. Andrews. Prefazione di Giovanni Gentile, Milano, Garzanti, 1931. Actually it is an abridged version of the two-volume English edition *The Story of my experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1927. Giovanni Gentile did not commit himself in his Preface which is, more or less, only an introduction to the subject: "From a historical point of view he [Gandhi] has succeeded in provoking one of the largest revolutions in the world" (p.23).
[8] Quoted in Mario Prayer, *L'intervista Gandhi-Mussolini: pagine "italiane" dal diario di Mahadev Desai*, in "Storia Contemporanea" XXIII, N.1, febbraio 1992, p.82.
[9] Ibidem.
[10] Romain Rolland (1866-1944), scholar of art and writer, Nobel prize for literature, did not know English, but his sister did and acted as interpreter.
[11] R. Rolland, quoted, pp.317-318: "J'ai envie d'y aller, de voir Mussolini. Mon désir est de voir les gens, de leur porter la mission de paix. [...] Scarpa [...] m'assure que cette visite est privée, non officielle, et que l'invitation est faite par lui [...] Pour Mussolini, je ne crois pas qu'il le veuille; mas s'il veut, je n'hésiterai pas".
[12] Countess Maria Carnevale-Alaimo, a pro-regime noblewoman, lived in a flat in Rome, in via Ludovisi 16, where she gave parties to prominent

people visiting Rome. Besides the receptions in honour of Gandhi on 12th and 13th December 1931, she had hosted also Muhammad Iqbal.

[13] Maurizio Mario Moris, a high military official, faithful to the Royal House of Savoy.

[14] See the article *Gandhi ricevuto dal Duce*, in "Corriere della Sera", Milano, 13 dicembre 1931.

[15] G. Scarpa, quoted, pp.38-40.

[16] R. Rolland, quoted, p.363: "Dans son ensemble, il n'a pas l'air très humain. Mais je dois dire, avec moi, il a été charmant. Et quand je lui ai dit que le pape n'avait pu me recevoir, il a eu une lueur de satisfaction malicieuse".

[17] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, Vol.54 (13 October 1931-8 February 1932), p.297. Also R. Rolland, quoted, p.372.

[18] Mahadev Desai, *Letter from Europe, 2, In Italy*, in "Young India", 14 January 1932. Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, New York, 1960, p.151. None of these two sources are actually useful from the point of view of the talk between Mussolini and Gandhi.

[19] See note 8. The Author of the article has translated Desai's notes from Gujarati into Italian (pp.75-77).

[20] In his diary, under the date of Monday, 21st December 1931, Gandhi wrote: "Wrote letters. Completed the one to Mussolini", in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, Vol.54, p.339.

[21] Sir Samuel Hoare, later Viscount Templewood, in his *Nine Troubled Years*, London, Collins, 1954, said that when he heard the report of "a fictitious interview" Gandhi was said to have given to Gayda of "Giornale d'Italia", he was so "horrified and amazed" that he at once telegraphed for his confirmation.

[22] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, Vol.54, p.291.

[23] Ibidem, p.291.

[24] Gandhi stayed at Yeravda Central Prison from 4th January 1932 to 8th May 1933. While there he read a book on Mussolini; from his Diary we understand it was *The Fascist Dictatorship in Italy*, by Gaetano Salvemini, either in the 1927 New York edition or in the enlarged 1928 London edition. From his notes, he read it from 24th February to 1st March 1932: he did not write any comments. See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.55 (10 February 1932-15 June 1932), pp.453-454.

[25] Ibidem, vol.54, p.329.

[26] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.63 (18 January 1934-19 May 1934), pp.255-257.

[27] Ibidem, pp.517-520. The three cuttings are as follows: A – *A New Trade Boycott*, from the Rome Correspondent of "The Times" on 15th December 1931; B – *Gandhiji Refutes*, in "The Times" on 18th December

1931; and C – *Signor Gayda's Reaffirmation*, in "The Times" on 21st December 1931. See also *Mirabehn's Recollection*, in "The Bombay Chronicle" on 11th March 1934.

[28] Consul General Scarpa too considered Gayda's interview a fake. See G. Scarpa, quoted, p.40.

[29] J. Nehru, quoted, p.28.

[30] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, Vol.54, p.363.

[31] Ibidem, vol.73 (21 February 1938-8 September 1938), p.156.

[32] Ibidem, Vol.79 (16 July 1940-27 December 1940), pp.454-456.

CHAPTER V
THE ROLE OF THE IPO AND THE ISMEO

Within the framework of propaganda and support of the fascist regime two cultural institutions were created in the Twenties and Thirties: the IPO and the IsMEO.

Actually these two institutions were primarily devoted to the study and spreading of the culture of the near, middle and far eastern countries: but they were created in a short time and financed by the government because of their possibility of being a fifth column of the fascist propaganda in the oriental world.

The Institute for the East, IPO [Istituto per l' Oriente], was created in 1921 in order to publish information, articles and notes on the near-east countries. The Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East, IsMEO [Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente] was founded in 1933 with a double aim to promote the studies and researches concerning Asian countries and to favour the presence of Italy in those countries from a political and economic point of view.

After the conquest of Libya in 1912, the Italian interests in a territorial colonial expansion increased along with the commercial penetration in the Arab countries of the Mediterranean. The hopes of Italy in an international mandate after the First World War were frustrated by the partition policy of France and England; in Italy the supporters of a more visible presence in the Levant gained

ground. In Eritrea the governor Jacopo Gasparini went saying that Eritrea was the starting point of a further expansion both for economical and commercial reasons as well as for the Italian prestige.

The advent of Fascism made things easier: the Arab countries, which had dreamt of an Arab nation after the war and had been frustrated in their expectations, found in Italy a favourable ground for their aspirations to liberty and independence. Fascism and Mussolini exploited these hopes in their anti-British policy.

The real founders of the IPO were a scholar, Carlo Alfonso Nallino,[1] and a high officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amedeo Giannini,[2] with the personal support of duke Giovanni Antonio Colonna di Cesarò, who had been since 1910 the soul of the Italian Colonial Institute and was the first president of the IPO. Carlo Alfonso Nallino, an Arabist, was until 1938 the scientific soul and coordinated the work of his not less famous colleagues such as Michelangelo Guidi, Ettore Rossi, his successor, Virginia Vacca, Laura Veccia Vaglieri, and Enrico Cerulli, to quote the prominent of them. Amedeo Giannini was the political soul, a sort of adviser and an unofficial representative of his Ministry. Both of them showed their skilfulness in the management of the monthly magazine "Oriente Moderno", which performed the task of keeping Italian readers informed of the events in the Muslim world; besides this, the magazine contained a politico-cultural section with articles of high standard, even though most of them were written under the input of its promoters.

Let us deal here with the Indian Muslim world, in particular with reference to the work of Muhammad Iqbal.

The first record of Iqbal's activity appeared in the second volume of "Oriente Moderno" (1922-23, p.191): it was a note by Carlo Alfonso Nallino who wrote that Iqbal's

"philosophical Persian poem *Asrar-i Khudi* [The Secrets of the Self] is actually a cry of Muslim revolt against Europe, a demonstration of the strongest aspirations of Pan-Islamic irredentism".

In 1932 Muhammad Iqbal published at Lahore his most famous poem *Javed-nama*. In the same year, in December issue of the magazine,[3] Maria Nallino published an article giving the summary of Iqbal's poem. Actually it was not an original contribution since no scholar would have been able to read and understand the poem in a short time. It was the translation of an unsigned article in English, published in "The Muslim Revival" at Lahore in June same year; however the notes were original and the title in which the *Javed-nama* was compared to the *Divine Comedy*. Since then Iqbal *magnum opus* has been called the "Divine Comedy of the East".

This particular interest of the board of the magazine "Oriente Moderno" for Iqbal's work in the Thirties of last century derived from two relevant elements: the first was that Italy had always considered in a sympathetic way the problems of the Muslims in India, the second was Iqbal's meeting with Mussolini.

In 1934, the year in which Iqbal published in London his lectures on *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, "Oriente Moderno" published, in an Italian translation, an English article by Arthur Jeffery, a professor of the American University of Cairo. Though the article[4] reflected the personal point of view of the author, it was informative on the role of the *Qur'an* in modern times.

With the outbreak of the Second World War "Oriente Moderno" increased its propagandistic character, though it maintained its cultural purpose. An Indian Muslim student, who got a degree in Italian literature in Rome, Reyaz ul-Hasan, was given the task of writing in 1940 a long article

on the life and work of Iqbal. It was a very interesting and explicative article,[5] because it was the first to be written in original Italian with direct translations from Iqbal's Urdu and Persian poems.

The necessity of an exhaustive handbook on the 19th century history of Muslim India brought in 1941 to the publication of *L'India Musulmana* [Muslim India]: written by Virginia Vacca, a member of the editorial staff of the magazine, it was published by the Institute for the Studies of International Politics in Milan.

The role played by the IPO could have been more efficacious if there were not rivalries among the many bodies interested in the colonial policy of Italy: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Colonies, the Oriental Institute of Naples re-organized in 1926, and the IsMEO created in 1933, not to speak of the tensions between these institutions and the governors of the various colonies. Many were the misunderstandings and the boycotting actions by the members of these bodies, which were more or less formed with the same people belonging to more than one of them.

The situation became worse when it was decided, with the consent of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the approval of Mussolini, to publish in 1932 a bi-monthly magazine "L'Avvenire Arabo/al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi" in Italian and in Arabic; the editor-in-chief was a Syrian journalist, Munir Lababidy, who expressed the programme of the paper in Arabic thus:

> Our main aim is as follows: we want to inform the Italian readers of oriental life, of Arab life in particular, in the Italian language [...] and the Arab readers of the news about them in the West in the Arabic language [...], in particular of this noble nation where we live, of the qualities and virtues which helped her to rise again thanks to her new regime and to the devotion her citizens have for their great *Duce*.[6]

Notwithstanding this *captatio benevolentiae*, the third issue of the magazine which appeared on 15th February was confiscated because an article concerning the dispute between Hejaz and Yemen had been considered an extolling of the Arab people: one thing was to inform, another thing was to glorify a population under a colonial government – thought the Italian Ministry for Colonies. The situation became worse: the Ministry for Colonies prohibited the diffusion of the magazine in the colonies, which meant practically its inefficacy. On 16th June the Minister for Colonies Emilio De Bono[7] expressed his negative opinion: the rivalry between his Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had broken openly. Too divergent was the policy of the two ministries: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted to show the good willing of fascist Italy and her support to the Arab aspirations, while the Ministry for Colonies could not consider the Arabs on a parity level in a period of opposition to the fascist rule by many nationalistic Arab groups. On 31st October 1932 the magazine stopped publication after the brief life of twenty issues.

Eight years after, with the break of the Second World War, the IPO started publishing in December 1940 a new fortnightly magazine, "Mondo Arabo", this too in Italian and Arabic, but with a clear propagandistic purpose, anti-British, anti-Zionist, pro-Arab. It is enough to quote an article, "The Mediterranean to the Mediterranean peoples", to understand the policy of the magazine:

> In the new Mediterranean order the Arab peoples will be given the task according to the civilization, the history and the aspirations of the Arab Nation [...]. There will be no place for a Zionist State in the new Mediterranean! [...]. To attain this destiny Italy is now fighting, on the sea which belonged to Rome, to attain this destiny the Arab Nation will not take a long time to side with the Axis countries who represent justice.[8]

The IsMEO was founded in 1933 under the input of Giuseppe Tucci,[9] then a young scholar of Indology and Tibetology, under the chairmanship of the philosopher Giovanni Gentile;[10] however, because of Gentile's political commitment, all the work was carried on by Giuseppe Tucci. Officially the IsMEO [Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East] was created to the purpose of developing the cultural relations with Asia countries; practically its aim was to emphasize the presence of Italy in those countries with a particular eye to the political and economic problems.

At the beginning of 1931 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacted the Italian National Institute for Exporting and some banks to explore the possibilities of creating an Institute in-charged with the task of collecting economic information on India and distributing some scholarships to students from India. In the same period Giuseppe Tucci sent to Gino Scarpa, Consul General in Calcutta, a similar, but cultural project concerning an exchange of students with India, scholarships for Indian students, and archaeological research in India. In between there was a third project, an economic one with some cultural aspects: in November 1929 Corrado Gini, President of the Central Institute for Statistics, had met in Geneva a professor of Calcutta University, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, then visiting professor at Munich University, who was interested in a project of an institute for economic relations between India and Italy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Mussolini were directly or indirectly aware of all these projects.

However, the right person was Giuseppe Tucci. He had been for five years in India, teaching at the Universities of Calcutta and of Shantiniketan, where he was in very friendly relations with Tagore, and had met Gandhi. Besides he was held in great favour by the British and his four scientific expeditions to Ladakh had been praised by the Indian press.

Scarpa, Mussolini's *longa manus*, had written in a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that, "for his position with the British and the Indians, Tucci is a precious element in the future". One of his students, P. N. Roy, who became professor of Italian at Calcutta University, had translated into Bengali a biography of Mussolini and compiled anthology of his speeches, *Mussolini and the Cult of Italian Youth*.[11]

Back from India, on 16th March 1931 Tucci sent to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dino Grandi, a report of his mission to India and a full draft of his proposal concerning the creation of an Institute: this draft combined the first two projects, excluding the third one limited to India and Italy. The Ministry, on the contrary, prepared its own draft where the aims of the institute were "cultural apparently", but "economic in reality" and political deep down: Dino Grandi approved of it on the following 17th April.

Two events contributed to the definitive creation of the IsMEO.

Kalidas Nag, the director of the India Bureau, a cultural association for the development of co-operation between India and the western countries, excluding Britain, visited Rome, delivered speeches at Rome University and at the "Accademia d'Italia", and concluded an informal agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about a future exchange of students. Nag was in good terms with Tucci, whom he had met during his stay in Calcutta.

On Tucci's suggestion, Giovanni Gentile supported the creation of the institute, prepared a new draft along the lines of the Fascist Institute of Culture, where both cultural and economic interests were indicated, submitted it directly to Mussolini and got it approved in July 1932.

After the settlement of juridical and financial problems, the IsMEO came into being on 21st December 1933 with an

opening address by Giovanni Gentile and a lecture by the geographer Filippo De Filippi on "The Italian Travellers in Asia". In the very beginning of his address Gentile stated:

> The Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East which we are opening today has been founded to promote and develop the cultural relations between Italy and the countries of central, southern and eastern Asia; besides (as indicated in article 1 of its Statutes), to examine the economical problems concerning these countries and Italy.[12]

However, the real fact that the Institute was mainly interested in India was underlined in the next paragraph when the philosopher said that "the first stimulus to maintain spiritual relations came from the most influential and representative persons of the great India".

At the same time a Congress of Asian Students was held in Rome: it was attended by about five hundred students and by the ambassadors of the middle and far-east countries. The political importance of this event was underlined by Mussolini's speech on 22nd December 1933, which was read in Italian, English, French and German. The *Duce* took advantage of this opportunity by criticizing the lack of relations between the Latin and Oriental worlds due to a non-Mediterranean civilization, a false civilization based on the pillars of subjugation and exploitation [Britain]:

> In the evils Asia laments, in her grudges, in her reactions we see our own face reflected in them. [...] Today Rome and the Mediterranean with their fascist rebirth, above all a spiritual rebirth, are going on with their unifying function. It is because of this that the new Italy has gathered all of you here. As in other occasions, in periods of moral crisis, the civilization of the world was saved by the co-operation between Rome and the East, today [...] we Italians and Fascists hope in our common millenary tradition of constructive co-operation.[13]

This idea was stated clearly three months after, on 18th

March, when speaking in Rome at the second five-year Assembly of the Regime: "The historical goals of Italy have two names - Asia and Africa. South and East are the cardinal points that must become the Italians' interest and will", meaning that Italy had to take Britain's place in Asia after the collapse of the British Empire. But, immediately after he added: "I am not speaking of territorial conquests, but of a natural expansion which must take to a co-operation between Italy and the peoples of Africa, between Italy and the nations of the near East".[14] It was a re-assuring message to England: Italy's expansion was supposed to be only commercial, but Mussolini was planning the conquest of Ethiopia in secret.

Among the Indian students who worked for the IsMEO the most active was Monindra Mohan Moulik, former secretary of the Indian Press Association of Calcutta, who got a Ph. D. in political sciences at Rome University; he contributed with many articles to the magazine "Asiatica" and was a correspondent from Rome for various Indian newspapers, in particular the "Amrita Bazar Patrika", near to Bose's positions. For the IsMEO he delivered on 4th April 1936 an interesting lecture on *Il fondamento ideale del nazionalismo indiano* [The Ideal Fundamentals of the Indian Nationalism] which is significant of the climate of that period. In spite of the fact that Moulik stated that the Gandhism was the vital force of the Indian Nationalism, he concluded that the external form of the political organization of the movement might take the form of fascism and national-socialism. Actually, a contradiction because this was the program of S. C. Bose, that is a sort of synthesis [*samyavada*] of fascism and communism, quite the opposite of Gandhi's non-violence .[15]

In 1935 the IsMEO began publishing a Bulletin of information, which a year after became a magazine "Asiatica". In the same period, in 1934, an Institute for the

Studies of International Politics (ISPI) had been created in Milan; operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its aim was mainly political. It promoted the study of international politics and economics, particularly international affairs and strategic problems, through a magazine "Relazioni Internazionali", a semiofficial paper, which covered the contemporary aspects of the Italian international policy.

"Asiatica" and "Relazioni Intenazionali" devoted much space to articles, information and notes on the Indian events, in particular on Gandhi, Nehru, and Bose, though many were purposely distorted or rigged.

Gandhi was described as a champion of humanity, a religious man and an apostle rather than a politician, a visionary and a dreamer, in other words a great figure, but with no practical sense: "The British will never get pushed out of India by means of prayers, fasts, and goat milk diets" - wrote E. Canevari, who, however, pointed out that his philosophy might well be admirable.[16] Other writers went farther off by describing him as an agent of the Jewish-Marxist International[17] or as an instrument of a world Masonic conspiracy![18]

Tens of references were dedicated to C. Bose who was considered in those years the fascist forte: at least up to 1943 "Relazioni Internazionali" regularly published Bose's appeals to his people to keep united and to fight the British on the side of India's natural allies.[19]

Notes and References

[1] Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872-1938), wrote original essays concerning the history of the Arabs, collected in six volumes, *Raccolta di scritti editi ed inediti*, Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1939-1948.

[2] Amedeo Giannini (1886-1960), expert of constitutional law.

[3] Maria Nallino, *Recente eco indo-persiana della "Divina Commedia": Muhammad Iqbal*, in "Oriente Moderno", Roma, XII, 1932, pp.610-622.

[4] Arthur Jeffery, *Il modernismo musulmano dell'indiano "Sir" Muhammad Iqbal*, in "Oriente Moderno", Roma, XIV, 1934, pp.505-513.
[5] Reyaz ul-Hasan, *Il poeta musulmano indiano Mohammed Iqbal (1873-1938)*, in "Oriente Moderno", Roma, XX, 1940, pp.605-623.
[6] Opening article of the "Avvenire Arabo", I, N.1, 15 gennaio 1932, p.1.
[7] Emilio De Bono (1866-1944), general in the first world war, was the military co-ordinator of the fascist troops and one of the quadrumvirs in the "March on Rome", Governor of Tripolitania from 1925, Minister for Colonies (afterwards Ministry of Italian Africa) from 12th September 1929 to 16th January 1935. On 25th July 1943 he voted in favour of "Dino Grandi's Order of the Day" against Mussolini; a special tribunal of the "Repubblica Sociale Italiana" sentenced him to death for high treason on 11th January 1944.
[8] Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Il Mediterraneo ai mediterranei*, in "Mondo Arabo", II, N.5, 28 febbraio.
[9] Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984), Professor of Indian Religions and Philosophies in the University of Rome, Member of the "Accademia d'Italia" from 1929, President of the IsMEO from 1948 to 1979.
[10] Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), philosopher and politician, editor-in-chief of the "Enciclopedia Italiana", President of the "Accademia d'Italia" 1943-1944. See *Giuseppe Tucci*, Ancona, Istituto Marchigiano. Accademia di Scienze Lettere e Arti, 1985, containing his Bibliography by L. Petech and F. Scialpi.
[11] These works were present in Mussolini's library, along with two biographies of Mussolini by V. V. Tahmankar, *Mussolini ani Fashismo*, Puna, 1927, and by B. M. Sharma, *Mussolini*, Lucknow, 1932. See L. De Felice, quoted, pp.515-516.
[12] Filippo De Filippi, *I viaggiatori italiani in Asia con un proemio di Giovanni Gentile*, Roma, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1934, p.5.
[13] Benito Mussolini, *Oriente e Occidente*, in "Il Popolo d'Italia", 23 dicembre 1933; now in *Opera Omnia*, quoted, vol.XXVI, pp.127-128.
[14] Benito Mussolini, *Sintesi del Regime*, in "Il Popolo d'Italia", 20 marzo 1934; now in *Opera Omnia*, quoted, vol.XXVI, pp.185-193.
[15] See C. Bose, *India's Struggle for Independence*, quoted.
[16] Emilio Canevari, *L'India e gli Inglesi*, in "La Vita Italiana", aprile 1942, pp.317-323.
[17] T. Salvotti, *Gli ebrei e settari alla conquista dell'India*, in "La Vita Italiana", aprile 1940, pp.385-392.
[18] Eros Vicari, *Perché l'India non è insorta*, in "La Vita Italiana", aprile 1942, pp.324-328.
[19] See the very interesting essay by Mario Prayer, *Italian Fascist Regime and*

Nationalist India, 1921-45, in “International Studies”, J. Nehru University, New Delhi, vol. 28. N.3, 1991, pp. 249-271, the only contribution in English on the subject.

CHAPTER VI
THE SUPPORT OF MUSSOLINI TO INDIA

In spite of the fact that the preference of Fascism went to Tagore in the years 1925-1926 and to Gandhi in the Thirties, actually Mussolini was more favourable to Muslim Indians than to Hindu Indians, and this for many reasons: the Italian colonies were prevalently made up of Muslim subjects, commercial contacts had been established long ago with Mediterranean countries, the fairs of Bari (Fiera del Levante), Naples (Triennale d'Oltremare), and Tripoli (Fiera Campionaria), the fact that the Muslim Indians were stronger anti-British while the majority of their Hindu fellow-countrymen was in favour of a co-operation with Britain.

The most important Muslim representative in Italy was for more than twenty years Muhammad Iqbal Shedai. Born in a small village near Sialkot, in the province of Punjab, on 4th October 1888, Shedai studied at the Scotch Mission College (later renamed Murray College), the same of his famous fellow-citizen Allama Iqbal. Both of them were students of Maulvi Mir Hassan; though Allama was eleven years older than Shedai, they surely knew each other.[1] In 1914 Shedai entered politics under the guidance of the brothers Muhammad 'Ali and Shaukat 'Ali,[2] who were emergent personalities in the Muslim community: he joined the 'Ali brothers' organization *Anjuman Khadami Ka'ba*, aimed to help pilgrims to Mecca. After teaching for a year at Hoti Mardan, Shedai was expelled from the North West

Frontier Province because of his anti-British attitude. During the First World War he was interned by the British, as well as his protectors, the 'Ali brothers, and released only in November 1918. In early 1920 a *Hijrat Movement* was started by Muhammad 'Ali and 'Abd ul-Majid Sindhi, who declared India as "dar ul-harb" [land of war] and exhorted Muslims to migrate to Afghanistan. Shedai reached Kabul where he was appointed by King Amanullah his Minister for Indina refugees. After working for the Afghan Department of Propaganda for two years he left for Moscow to study the Red Revolution; and from there he went to Ankara to discuss with Kamal Atatürk the problem of the Indian muslims in the Indian Army whom the Turks considered as responsible for their defeat in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria during the First World War.

In 1923 Shedai was sent to Italy with the task from the *Hindustan Ghadar Party*[3] of starting contacts with the Fascist Government. In Rome he could contact some prominent people who introduced him into the world of governmental affairs, namely Carlo Arturo Enderle[4] of Muslim origin, a neurologist, who was the adviser of the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* and an informer of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the oriental scholars Ettore Rossi[5] and Virginia Vacca[6] of the University of Rome. In Milan he met in 1925 Luigi Lanfranconi,[7] a member of the Parliament and president of the National Institute for Economic and Commercial Development, who was interested in India's economy. In June 1926 an Indian delegation was in Milan to explore such possibilities to the extent of establishing an Italo-Indian bank: among the delegates there was Jawaharlal Nehru. Shedai was present and introduced Nehru to the fascist leaders according to a report[8] written by Enderle for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the same month Shedai met Mussolini's brother, Arnaldo, at the premises of the newspaper "Il Popolo d'Italia", and Piero Parini, a member

of the editorial staff. Besides he met captain Giovanni Tavazzani, a member of the Military Information Service (SIM).

However, Shedai's contacts did not bring him much and at the end of 1926 the Ghadar Party decided to transfer him to Marseille to make propaganda among Indian sailors. Two years after he moved to Paris: there he married a French lady. At the outbreak of the Second World War, on plea of the British Government, Shedai was expelled from France because he was considered an Italian informer. His wife Bilquis got divorce and decided to live in London along with her daughter Shirin.

From Paris he went to Switzerland staying in Lausanne; he was in friendly terms with the Italian Consul in Geneva, Renato Bova Scoppa, who had a high opinion of him and asked the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help him to organize a reliable service of information. Unfortunately his activity against England was detected by the Swiss police and in October 1940 he was expelled from the territory of the Confederation: the logical choice for Shedai was to return to Italy. He reached Rome on 20th November and was asked to work under the orders of Renato Prunas, in charge of the department Transoceanic Affairs, and his substitute Rodolfo Alessandrini.

However, he had always remained into contact with Italy through the Italian diplomats in Paris: he also attended the Congress of the Asiatic Students in Rome in 1933. From a note of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Italian Ambassador in Paris on 11th December 1933 we learn he had an Italian passport issued by the Consulate General in Paris under the name of Mohammed El Hindi, Somali citizen: "The known El Hindi offered to co-operate to the meting of the oriental students which will take place in Rome on 21st instant under the auspices of the Institute for the East in agreement with this Ministry. Since we consider

his co-operation useful, we are informing Your Excellency and the Consul General; however, it is advisable that the Italian authorities do not appear to be into contacts with El Hindi".

He had also offered his service in Ethiopia; in early 1935 he had advised that the conquest of Abyssinia would create a great enmity between Italy and Great Britain, which would eventually, in the long run, take to a war. The English considered that area their own zone of influence and did not allow any interference to their maritime routes. Hence Shedai advised to start a propaganda activity soon, before it was too late; but his offer was not accepted as the Italians did not want to be at daggers drawn with England in a period of impending war in Africa. Shedai, who was a patriot, thought that a war in Ethiopia would involve in the long run the British, who would thus be compelled to shift a large part of their Indian troops to Africa, leaving India defenceless and open to an internal revolt. And when war broke out, his Ghadar Party printed and distributed in India thousands of leaflets inviting the Indian troops to refuse to leave their country and to declare they were ready only to fight for the defence of their motherland.

After the conquest of Ethiopia, Shedai again informed the Italian authorities that Britain had not accepted the Italian conquest and would, sooner or later, take her revenge:

> According to the all the important men we have approached, in agreement with our personal opinion, England has received from the Italian occupation of Ethiopia such a serious loss of prestige as to shake the foundations of her Empire: it is a matter of life and death for the British Empire to regain her prestige in the world and all our information are confirming that, in order to punish Italy and to teach the world a lesson, England is making the biggest military effort as ever in history.[9]

Hence the Italian colonial empire was to be organized like the British India, completely self-sufficient and not depending economically and militarily on Italy. For this reason he suggested for Italy a period of ten-year peace so that she could be prepared to face a future war; actually this was also Mussolini's idea. In fact, when on 1st September 1939 Hitler caused a war, Mussolini tried to postpone Italy's entrance into the conflict by declaring the non-belligerency. Eventually, after the speed of the German victories, he made the mistake of entering the war, unprepared, on 10th June 1940: he had thought the war would be a matter of a few months, since he had excluded the entry of the USA, and that was the end of all. Ethiopia was not yet ready both from the economic and military points of view, the English fleet was able to cut the communications between Italy and the colonies of Libya and Ethiopia, and control the Mediterranean (Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt) and the Arabian Sea (Aden, Somaliland, South Africa, India).

More or less, in the same period, in order to make propaganda among the Muslim Indians who were in favour of Abyssinia, the Italian consulates of Bombay and Calcutta tried to counterbalance the British propaganda by supporting those Muslims who looked at Italy with great expectations. The Italian consul in Bombay succeeded in obtaining in 1936 some funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to finance a bilingual English and Urdu newspaper "The Glance", published by a young historian, Muhammad 'Ali Salman, a great admirer of Mussolini and his policy. Another weekly newspaper in Hindi, "Lockandi Morcha", addressed to the Hindus, was started in Bombay in July 1939: its editor, Damley, published Mussolini's *The Doctrine of Fascism*, and some articles by Virginio Gayda. With the break of the war the Italian consulates were closed and this kind of propaganda was stopped.

In Italy, in the years before the Second World War,

Subhas Chandra Bose[10] was considered the alternative to Gandhi's non-violent movement. Bose, who at the age of 21 was a follower of Gandhi, soon became a strong supporter of a militant nationalism and of an immediate agitation against the British in India. In his inaugural speech as mayor of Calcutta, on 24th September 1930, first expressed his support for a fusion of socialism and fascism:

> I would say we have here in this policy and program a synthesis of what modern Europe calls Socialism and Fascism. We have here the justice, the equality, the love, which is the basis of Socialism, and combined with that we have the efficiency and the discipline of Fascism as it stands in Europe today.[11]

His *entente cordiale* with the Indian Congress lasted until 1931: in December 1927 he became president of the Congress and in 1930 mayor of Calcutta. After being jailed by the British, in 1932 he was granted release subjected to his leaving the country; he chose Austria for his exile. From Vienna, where in 1933 he had written his book *India's Struggle for Independence*, he started his contacts with Mussolini and prominent Italian people such as Gentile and Tucci. In December 1933 he attended in Rome the meeting of the students from Asia: on 28th December he was received by Achille Starace,[12] who had been favourably impressed by his admiration of fascism and by his young spirit and creative enthusiasm.[13] Actually Bose saw fascism a useful means of transforming the Indian sleepy society into a vibrant one; while Gandhi tried to compromise with the British, Bose, who held up an alternative vision, wanted immediate action against them.

In the first months of 1934 Bose was received twice by Mussolini: on 6th January and on 28th April. Unfortunately there are no records of these two meetings. The only source is a letter from Bose to Mussolini on 29th November same year, when he was compelled to go back to India because of

a serious illness of his father. In the letter Bose expressed his gratefulness to Mussolini for his support of the political problems of India:

> Duce!
> Owing to the sudden illness of my father who is in a precarious condition, I have to fly back home at once. At the moment, I am passing through Roma on my way to India. I very much regret that owing to my sudden and unavoidable departure, I could not once more have the honour of calling on Your Excellency. I only hope that I shall be able to come back to Europe once again in order to finish my half-done task. I shall never forget the kindness I have received at Your Excellency's hands – nor shall I ever forget the sympathy Your Excellency has shown for my unfortunate country. I carry home with me feelings of profound gratitude towards Your Excellency. I am sure Your Excellency will never forget that India expects much help and guidance from Your Excellency. It may be that Your Excellency is destined to play an important part in the liberation of my unfortunate country, as Your Excellency had already done in the case of Italy.[14]

However, it seems that, except from a verbal support, Mussolini had not until then committed himself. He was still hoping to come to terms with Britain and tried to avoid any open misunderstanding as possible: for example, on the occasion of Bose meeting Starace, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs disposed that press news were to be released after the official visit of the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, at the end of December 1933. Actually, every time Bose was received officially, the British ambassador in Rome, Eric Drummond, sent a note of protest against the audiences granted to a *persona non grata*.

Two months after, Bose was again in Europe: on 25th January 1935 he was received by Mussolini to whom he explained his programme of founding an international league with the purpose of a close co-operation between the

nationalistic parties and the oppressed peoples in order to start, at the right time, a simultaneous revolutionary movement.[15]

As for Bose, he exerted his influence in India in order to change the anti-fascist attitude of the newspaper "Forward" of Calcutta and tried in many ways to minimize the negative attitude of the Indian press on the occasion of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. In a letter to Bose, the editor of the "Forward": "I fully appreciate your attitude towards the Abyssinian question and I hope you have noticed a change in *Forward* articles on the subject".

In April Bose paid a visit to Romain Rolland, who was very impressed by him. Bose explained him why Gandhi's non-violence was at a dead-point: in spite of Gandhi's popularity among the masses, the population was not stimulated to action because of Gandhi's policy of compromising. From Rolland's diary it appears that Bose was convinced that India could get her independence only through violence and terrorist methods, or only if England was occupied in a not-to-far European conflict.[16]

After the Abyssinian war, Bose who had been labelled as a "pro-soviet subversive" became more important in the eyes of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who took the initiative and arranged a meeting with Mussolini for 27th March 1936. Of course the meeting had been prepared in advance; under the date of 15th February there exist a note by the Ministry about it:

> We think it useful and opportune to contact Bose, before his leaving for India, by sending him to Paris one of our men and by inviting him to come to Italy. Before phoning him, we would like to know whether Your Excellency likes to meet him.

In December 1937, during a staying in Europe, Bose was elected president of the Indian Congress: on 20th

January 1938 he was received by Ciano, who did not have a high opinion of the Indians. In his diary Ciano wrote:

Bose, head of the Indian Congress, talked to me of the situation of his Party. So far the projects have been few. At the centre is Great Britain which has the full command. In the provinces some less important departments have been allocated to Indians. Great Britain has in small and big towns very good agents who oppress the population and find their support in the English troops. The program of his Party is: the independence of the Country. The means to reach it: obstructionism and passive resistance. No armed struggle. They ask us only two things: to continue to keep Great Britain worried about our intentions and to inform them regularly about the political situation in general; all this, so that they can better guide themselves. In my turn I suggested Bose to divert his sympathy to Italy and Japan, the two countries who have damaged the British more deeply. He told me he will try, but it is difficult because the Indian people are dominated by their sentiments, and today they are more favourable to China, just as in the past they were in favour of Ethiopia. In my opinion and on the basis of my short visits to India, I think the Indians are flabby people and un- reactive, who will never attain independence unless other forces bring about the collapse of Great Britain. And perhaps, even in that occasion, India will be submitted by a new master.[17]

At the beginning of 1939 Bose was re-appointed president of the Congress, in spite of Gandhi's and Nehru's opposition. Bose's propaganda campaign in favour of totalitarian regimes in Europe was condemned by a large part of the Indian Congress.

Nehru, whom the Fascists had vainly tried to have at their side, wrote:

> He [Bose] did not approve of any step being taken by the Congress which was anti-Japanese or anti-German or anti-Italian. And yet such was the feeling in the Congress and the country that he did not oppose [any] manifestations of Congress sympathy with China and the victims of fascist and nazi aggression. We passed many resolutions and organized many demonstrations of which he did not approve during the period of his president-ship, but he submitted to them without protest because he realized the strength of feeling behind them. There was a big difference in outlook between him and others in the Congress Executive, both in regard to foreign and internal matters, and this led to a break early in 1939.[18]

We have said that Nehru was one the goals of fascism: he was considered an intelligent and shrewd politician and one of the most probable successors to the Mahatma, as later on it turned to be. Nehru too had been intrigued by Mussolini's personality, but however he did not fall into the trap due to some circumstances. The occasion was in March 1936; actually a meeting had been scheduled for 1st March, but Nehru's wife died the day before, on 28th February in Switzerland; the visit was then postponed to 7th March, but this too was cancelled because of Nehru's bad health, or perhaps because of a diplomatic illness as it is guessed from Nehru's memoirs:

> During our stay at Montreux I had a visit from the Italian Consul at Lausanne, who came over especially to convey to me Signor Mussolini's deep sympathy at my loss. I was a little surprised for I had not met Signor Mussolini or had any other contacts with him. I asked the Consul to convey my gratitude to him.
> Some weeks earlier a friend in Rome had written to me to say that Signor Mussolini would like to meet me. There was no question of my going to Rome then and I said so. Later, when I was thinking of returning to India by air, that message was repeated and there was a touch of eagerness and insistence about it. I wanted to avoid this interview and yet I

> had no desire to be discourteous. Normally I might have got over my distaste for meeting him, for I was curious also to know what kind of man the "Duce" was. But the Abyssinian campaign was being carried on then and my meeting him would inevitably lead to all manner of inferences, and was bound to be used for fascist propaganda. No denial from me would go far. I knew of several recent instances when Indian students and others visiting Italy had been utilized, against their wishes and sometimes even without their knowledge, for fascist propaganda. And then there had been the bogus interview with Mr. Gandhi which the "Giornale d'Italia" had published in 1931.[19]

In spite of this attitude, Shedai considered Nehru a probable sympathizer of fascism: this idea was based on the fact of Gandhi's and Nehru's attitudes towards Britain. According to Shedai Gandhi was more favourable to British proposals, while Nehru was more pragmatic in his attitude and did not like the Mahatma's conciliatory tendency. Though Shedai's analysis was correct, Gandhi and Nehru agreed fully on the main problems: their differences were only formal due to their different personalities. In fact, when Gandhi retired temporarily from politics in 1935-36, he handed the direction of the National Congress over to Nehru.

Nehru was adamant in his policy, both internal and international. When the Second World War was approaching, the Congress was compelled to pay attention to foreign developments. Nehru's main fear was for Hitler's aggressive attitudes; he considered Mussolini a man who "did not then appear as a major threat to world-peace". He expressed his view in his *Discovery of India*, written later on, in the Ahmadnagar Fort Prison Camp from 9th August 1942 to 28th March 1945:

> It is surprising how internationally minded we grew in spite of our intense nationalism. No other nationalist movement of a subject country came anywhere near this, and the

general tendency in such countries was to keep clear of international commitments. In India also there were those who objected to our lining up with republican Spain and China, Abyssinia and Czechoslovakia. Why antagonize powerful nations like Italy, Germany and Japan, they said; every enemy of Britain should be treated as a friend; idealism has no place in politics, which concerns itself with power and the opportune use of it. But these objectors were overwhelmed by the mass sentiment the Congress had created and hardly ever gave public expression to their views.[20]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

[1] Shedai's father, Ghulam 'Ali Bhutta, had been Allama's teacher at the Sialkot College; besides, it is reported that Shedai met the poet in Rome in 1931. In a letter dated 11th August 1937, writing to the art historian 'Abd Allah Chughatai, Iqbal asked him "to convey his greetings to Shedai and his wife". See *Iqbal-namah. Makatib-i Iqbal* [Letters of Iqbal], edited by Shaikh 'Ata Allah, Lahore, Iqbal Akademi Pakistan, 2005, p.600.

[2] Born in 1878 and 1873, in a prosperous and influential family of the then princely State of Rampur, they had both studied at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of 'Aligarh. The younger one, Muhammad 'Ali, who attended advanced studies at Oxford, became a journalist: in 1911 he founded a weekly paper "The Comrade" and entered politics.

[3] The *Hindustan Ghadar Party* was actually founded after the 1857-58 "Mutiny"; however, it was inactive for a long period. Re-organized in the USA by Punjabi Indians in 1913, the party ran a newspaper "Ghadar" (an Urdu and Punjabi word from Arabic meaning "revolt"), aiming to liberate India from British rule. In 1915, at the outbreak of the First World War, members of the party conducted terrorist activities in Central Punjab, which were suppressed by the British. Shedai joined the Party in 1918. See Appendix I. After the defeat of Italy and Germany in the Second World War, the Ghadar Party looked to the Soviet Union for support.

[4] Born in Rome in 1892 from Muslim Rumanian parents (his original name was 'Ali ibn Jafar), he was a professor of psychiatry in the university of Rome.

[5] Ettore Rossi (1894-1955), succeeded to Carlo Alfonso Nallino in the

direction of "Oriente Moderno" in 1938; he was an expert of the Turkish world.
[6] In 1941 Virginia Vacca published a very useful handbook, *L'India Musulmana*, in the series of publications sponsored by the Italian Institute for the Studies of International Politics (ISPI) in Milan.
[7] Luigi Lanfranconi (1882-1938).
[8] All the information about Shedai's activity up to 1940 come from this report in ASMAE, Gabinetto, Italia, file 6, fasc.408; and from History Thesis discussed in Urdu at the University of Punjab, Lahore, in 1976, by 'Awan Ahmad Gulzar (see Bibliography).
[9] Ibidem.
[10] Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945), wrote an important history of the Indian events from 1920 to 1934, *India's Struggle for Independence* (London, Weshart & Co,, 1935), which was translated into Italian and published in July 1942 (Firenze, Sansoni). Later on, Bose added an appendix dealing with the "Quit India Resolution" of 7th August 1942 and the future prospect of India, which too was translated into Italian and published in April 1943 (Firenze, Sansoni).
[11] Quoted in Leonard A. Gordon, *Brothers against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, New York, 1990, p.234.
[12] Achille Starace (1889-1945), Secretary of the National Fascist Party from December 1931 to October 1939.
[13] Interview to Bose: *A colloquio con Bose ex sindaco di Calcutta. La gioventù dell'India e la forza creatrice del Fascismo*, in "Il giornale d'Italia", 29 dicembre 1933.
[14] ASMAE, Gabinetto, pos.7, fasc. "S.C. Bose".
[15] Renzo De Felice, *Il fascismo e l'Oriente*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1988, p.206.
[16] R. Rolland, quoted, pp.473-477.
[17] Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario 1937-1943*, a cura di Renzo De Felice, Milano, Rizzoli, 1980, pp.88-89.
[18] Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta, The Signet Press, 1946, p.369. Pandit Nehru (1889-1964) studied at Cambridge, President of the Indian Congress for many terms, substituted Gandhi during his temporary retirement from active politics in 1934-1939; he was Prime Minister of India from the independence on 15th August 1947 until his death.
[19] J. Nehru, quoted, p.28. The passage goes on with the description of Nehru being met in Rome during an evening and night stop of his plane for the East and the insistence from a high official of the Italian Ministry to meet Mussolini. However, Nehru had his way and the meeting did not take place.
[20] J. Nehru, quoted, p.369.

CHAPTER VII
THE YEARS OF THE WAR: 1940-1945

The Italian political atmosphere had changed completely during the war. In the Thirties the fascist regime was not prepared to support the Muslim Indians openly and in a practical way. As already said in the Introduction, Italy was apparently trying to establish better relations with Britain: in more than one occasion, Dino Grandi himself had supported a policy of neutrality in the affairs between the Indians and the British and had invited his government to avoid contacts with Indian nationalists so as not to make Britain suspicious. Now, in a period of war, the Italian attitudes were different and Shedai's return to Italy in 1940 was of course welcomed.

Iqbal Shedai reached Rome on 20th November 1940 and lived there till the end of the war; after Mussolini's fall, he moved to the north, to the territory of the Italian Social Republic (RSI).

In Rome Shedai worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asia section, directed by Renato Prunas and his assistant Rodolfo Alessandrini. Shedai's first task was to organize from Rome a radio service (Himalaya) in Hindustani language addressed to Muslim Indians. The contents of the broadcastings, which started in February 1941, regarded strikes, terrorist actions and sabotage in India and anything could damage British interests there: in his task Shedai was helped with information by the then Italian minister in Kabul, Pietro Quaroni. Actually a radio Bari had

started broadcasting on 24th May 1934; in January 1938 a monthly magazine "Radyo Bari - Radio Araba di Bari" began its publication in Italian and Arabic.[1]

The un-official broadcast from radio Himalaya was addressed mainly to Muslim Indians, who were strongly anti-British, in particular those along the borders with Afghanistan; besides it was necessary to counter-balance the British propaganda which insisted on the fact that the Japanese protected the Hindus and in case of conquest they would create an imperialistic Hindu Government under Chandra Bose. And when it was thought to have Bose speaking from radio Himalaya, Quaroni from Kabul on 20th February 1942 did not agree because he wanted radio Himalaya to maintain its Muslim character even though the broadcasting was addressed to all Indians, irrespective of religions.

The clandestine radio Himalaya and the official radios Rome and Bari were actually complementary. One of the highest moments of large diffusion was on the occasion of the appeal of the Grand Mufti Amin al-Husain on 22nd August 1942. The spiritual guide of the Muslim world invited all the Indians to throw the English from their Country. Shedai thanked him underlying the fact that the radio was the voice of all the Indians, though he appealed in particular to his co-religionists; underneath there was his wish to emphasize the role of the Muslim League, which - as we have already seen in the previous chapters - needed to be recognized as the sole representative of the Muslim Indians in order to carry on with the project of Pakistan. However, Shedai's successes increased the rivalry between him and Bose, who wanted himself to make use of radio Himalaya.

The program of Shedai in October 1939 was very practical and clear:

> Broadcasting in Hindustani and in Persian from Rome should be started soon. It is necessary to underline the fact that Russia is going to attack India and that the Indian army should remain in India; in this way Egypt, the Sudan and Kenya will be defenceless. [...] As things are, Italy must move soon to counterbalance the Anglo-French-Turkish propaganda, which is addressed not only against Germany, but above all Italy, who is the power with her main interests in the Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, this program became effective fifteen months later, when a lot of time had been wasted because of the uncertainty of the Italian authorities.

Only in the first months of 1941 did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepare a draft for India based on Shedai's information:

England is making India the largest base of operations against the Axis in the Mediterranean, in Africa and in the East. India is becoming the principal supplier of war materials for these three sectors; the British Secretary for India, Mr. Amery, has declared that India should supply from ten to twenty million soldiers to face the military power of the Axis. This will be carried on by compulsory recruit through India's provincial governments.

Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to carry out a plan of political and military action which makes India of no use for British intentions and, eventually, causes the fall of British rule. All this will mean the full victory of the Axis and the end of the war. It is advisable to go on with this work in Italy because she will get most advantages. [...].

In the political field:

1) Propaganda. It can be carried on through the radio. However, other subjects must be faced; workers' strikes, terrorist and guerrilla actions in India in order to disturb the war industry, the British government activities, the

supply to the army. Besides, to give radio instructions for strikes and terrorist attacks, the sabotage actions against railways, war material depots and English officers, etc.

2) Creation of an Indian Nationalistic-Revolutionary Committee in Italy.

3) And later on, an Indian Nationalistic-Revolutionary Government. For the time being, this is not advisable because the possibility of proclaiming the independence of India is not yet near and such a government might be considered a puppet government in the hands of the Axis.

In the political-revolutionary field:

1)The anti-British guerrilla of the tribes along the Indo-Afghan border is to be intensified and enlarged to all tribes besides the Waziris (the frontier tribes are about 250,000 armed men, who, as in 1919, are able to engage more than 100,000 Anglo-Indian soldiers [...].

2) Technical means, such as radios, explosives, machine-guns, anti-aircraft weapons, etc. should be sent.

3) Indian prisoners are to be used. All the Indians captured in North Africa and elsewhere should be sent to Italy [...] When the number of these prisoners-of-war is sufficient, an army and air force will be formed so as to be employed on the fronts where the English employ Indian troops.

4) Weapons to be sent to India. This is the most important problem from the revolutionary point of view. The doctrine of non-violence has been accepted in India mainly because the population does not have weapons to use. If enough weapons are sent to India, as the Irish of America did for Ireland, it would be possible to develop a revolutionary movement and a guerrilla so as to make England loose the control of India. [...] These weapons can be sent as soon as we acquire some localities along the coasts

of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (secret expeditions to the Indian coasts by submarines or corsair ships) or we occupy countries from where to send these weapons by air.

These were the main points of the draft. However the whole program depended on one problem: the weapons and how to send them to India. In the draft it was said that all the expenses, except the radio propaganda, were to be faced by the military authorities: this was enough to make the program nil, as the Italian army did not have sufficient equipment for itself, not to speak of the quantity needed for a sub-continent. Besides, there was the problem of occupying some military enclaves in territories under British control. In conclusion, something unrealistic!

In April 1942 a "Society of Friends of India" was created by the IsMEO, then presided by Giovanni Gentile. The president of the society was Ezio Maria Gray, vice-president of the Chamber of "Fasci e Corporazioni": Shedai was appointed its Secretary General. The opening ceremony took place in Rome on 28th April: all the most important Indian personalities were invited or were asked to give their consent, among them Subhas Chandra Bose and his personal secretary Nambiar, who were in Germany, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah, Abu al-Kalam Azad, 'Abd al-Ghaffar Khan, the Faqir of Ipi. In his speech E. M. Gray emphasized the affinity existing between Italy, a country who had been oppressed in the past, and India, a country oppressed by Britain, the common enemy to be defeated; and went on repeating some passages delivered by Mussolini on 22nd December 1933, stating in particular that Italy did not have any political or territorial interest for India save "promoting, establishing and defending in the world the kingdom of a better justice".[2]

Then spoke Shedai who paid his respects to Arnaldo Mussolini who had encouraged him, in a meeting in 1926,

to foster friendship between Italy and India, and to Benito Mussolini who has always encouraged this friendship:

> We Indians look at him [Mussolini] for encouragement and assistance in our effort to get our Country free from the satanic clutches of John Bull. [...]. In June 1926 I had the honour to meet the late Signor Arnaldo Mussolini in the premises of the "Popolo d'Italia" in Milan. After a long conversation his frankness - it was his own affirmation - made him my best friend in Italy. Very few people know the story of my meetings with that noble soul. Many Italians can confirm my words. The idea of making Italy and India in direct contact from a cultural and economical point of view was inspired to me by Arnaldo Mussolini. He promised to help me in the best possible way, but for many reasons that idea could not be realized at that time. After his untimely death, difficulties persisted: today, thanks to my perseverance and the goodwill of the Italian friends, they have been overcome, and if Arnaldo Mussolini were among us, he would have been happy to see that the seed sown by him about sixteen years ago has sprouted and is going to become a tree in blossom.[3]

The programme of the Society was two-fold: monthly or bi-monthly lectures and practical help to all those categories of people interested in commercial and economic exchanges between Italy and India after the war. It is to be underlined the fact that this Society was created in a particular political period: is it only a coincidence that it was born after the fall of Singapore and the Japanese march to Burma? An issue of the IsMEO's magazine "Asiatica" published in January-February 1942 an article "Il momento dell'India" (The moment of India) signed with the pseudonym "Politicus", a kind of retrospective of India's history in the light of the new military events.

Some months before, in December 1941, Iqbal Shedai had attended a German-Italian-Indian meeting in Berlin concerning the problems of India and the Middle East:

among the attendants were Subhas Chandra Bose, and Ghulam Siddiq Khan, former Foreign Minister of king Amanullah and his most active supporter in Berlin. The Italian delegation was headed by Rodolfo Alessandrini, in-charged of the "Asia office" in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who prepared a note about it for Ciano:

> A special office has been established in Italy under the authority of the D.G.A.T. [Direction General for Transoceanic Affairs]: it is made up of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the SIM, of the Ministry of Popular Culture, and of a group of Indian agents under Mr. Iqbal Shedai. This office has the task of concentrating all the problems concerning India and Middle East countries.
> In Germany too an "India office" has been established, but made up of only Indian agents under Mr. Bose. It has been spoken of the possibility to convert, in the future, this Office into a mission of "Free India" in Germany. Mr. Bose insists on being recognized personally, but Germany has decided to postpone this recognition to the moment of the declaration of Indian independence [...].

Our India office is exclusively Italian and Mr. Shedai is only a technical member. If in Berlin Mr. Bose is acknowledged as "Representative of India", we shall attribute the same capacity to Mr. Shedai, who has been a faithful and loyal friend of ours for years and whose work has been very precious for us in recent times. It is to added that Mr. Shedai is a Muslim and that it is in our interest to have in Rome a Muslim as the first representative of the future India.[4]

The subject discussed at Berlin meeting had already been dealt with by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who considered India being in its sphere of influence. In April 1941, ten months after the entry of Italy into the war, the Ministry prepared a draft. The opening paragraph read:

> England is converting India into a large base of operations against the Axis in the Mediterranean, in Africa and in the

> East. India is becoming the principal supplier of war material. The Secretary of State for India, Leopold S. Amery, has declared that India is to supply from ten to twenty million soldiers. The British government intends to obtain it through a compulsory recruitment by the Indian provincial governments.[5]

In view of this, the Italian Ministry reacted with "a political and military plan of action in order to make India not to be used by Britain". How to put it into practice? From a political point of view it was necessary to use all the possible means of propaganda, to help Indian revolutionary parties who oppose Britain; from a military point of view it was necessary to send arms to the north-west frontier tribes and people expert in sabotage actions.

However, the whole plan looked utopian. First of all, the majority party, the Indian National Congress, dominated by the personality of Gandhi, was in favour of a non-violent policy; the same was the attitude of the most important frontier party, the "Red Shirts" of 'Abd al-Ghaffar Khan", who though himself a Muslim was allied to the Congress. Secondly, for the supply of arms Italy needed to occupy "some ports along the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean"; but in 1941 the Italian forces were still fighting in North Africa and had not yet conquered Egypt as they intended to do. Finally, it was said that "the expenses for all the intelligence activities were to be borne by the Defence ministry", who was not in a position to carry on with such kind of work.

In 1939 Bose, who opposed the non-violent policy of the Indian National Congress, organized its left wing into a kind of party, the "Forward Bloc". In two editorials of August 1939 Bose expressed his ideas about the new situation:

> The Forward Bloc has appeared because the Congress must enter on a new phase in its evolutionary process. [...] Today

> the slogan of "unity at any price and under all circumstances" is a convenient slogan in the mouths of those who have lost dynamism and revolutionary urge. Let us not be led astray by its fascinating appeal. [...] It often happens that through compromise and co-operation with the right-wing, the left-wing gathers strength and extends its influence. In a different set of circumstances, this may not prove possible. It may be then necessary for the left-wing to differentiate itself from the right and consolidate and expand its strength and following. In such circumstances, a sharp conflict, though painful for the time being, may in reality be conducive to progress and be, in fact, unavoidable. [...] The Gandhiites of 1920 were the left wing in the Congress, but it does not follow there from that they are the left wing today. The leftists of yesterday often, if not always, become the rightists of to-morrow. [...] Between 1936 and 1938 the left wing of the Congress has grown and developed as a result of co-operation with the right. In September 1938 the cry was first raised on behalf of the right that co-operation with the left was no longer possible and that the left was becoming too noisy and troublesome to collaborate with. This new cry ultimately reached climax in 1939, when the right-wing deliberately decided to end co-operation with the left.[6]

Having explained why the "Forward Bloc" had come into existence, Bose went on discussing the role of the new party which can be summarized in non-cooperation with Britain and in preparing the country for the coming struggle.

The outcome was a strong hand by the British Government in India. Thousands members of the "Forward Bloc" were sent to prison or internment camps: Bose was arrested in July 1940. On 29th November he started a hunger-strike and on 5th December he was released and sent to house arrest in Calcutta, from where he escaped on 17th January 1941 and reached in an adventurous voyage Kabul, via Peshawar. There he contacted the Russian, German, and Italian Legations, but he was practically helped only by the

Italians. The then head of the Italian Legation, Minister Pietro Quaroni, arranged for his long travel to Europe via Moscow and supplied him with a false passport under the name of Orlando Mazzotta, an employee of the Legation; with the connivance of the German Legation, Bose left for Moscow on 18th March, reaching Berlin on 2nd April.

On 27th March 1941 the Minister Quaroni informed his Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bose's programme; here are the main points:

> Free constituted India along the line of free governments in London. Making of a treaty between the Free India Government and Italy, Germany and Japan, who would agree on the recognition of the full independence for India. Help from our part, i.e. a loan to encourage revolution in India. Bose gives great importance to radio broadcasting. Necessary preliminary for revolution in India is to persuade Indian people that England is going to lose the war. He will ask for permission to make special broadcasts of Free India.

Among Quaroni's information to his Ministry was an activity of propaganda and sabotage he had decided to support in the area of the North-West Frontier of India, among those tribes, with the help of Bose's secretary. The Italian Minister was a good connoisseur of the Afghan situation: a remark of him is astonishing. He said clearly:

> However it is my impression that if last June [1940] we had been organized to operate in India, it might have then been possible to make events coming to a head. Since a similar situation may occur this year, it is advisable to arrange right now for means of action in order to take advantage of the first available occasion.[7]

This story of Italy's support of an anti-British guerrilla in the borderland area goes back to the late Thirties. On 16th April 1937, the "Daily Herald" claimed on its front page that "Mussolini was behind the revolt of the North-West Frontier Province". Probably it was only a rumour, but, as a

matter of fact, Quaroni was already at Kabul and may have started being involved in those affairs. Two years after, on 26th February 1939, the "Sunday Chronicle" implied that a radio-link between the Faqir of Ipi[8] and the Italians had been established. We do not know whether that information was true; however, in the draft on India of April 1941, it was stated:

> It is necessary also to send technical equipments, such as radio sets to link the operative direction with the various tribes and the Faqir of Ipi with this place [Italy], along with code-books, binoculars, materials to make explosives and bombs, machine-guns, anti-aircraft weapons, etc; materials to be sent partly now and partly after we have occupied a territory (Syria and Iraq) situated at such a distance from the Indo-Afghan frontier as to deliver them by planes. In the meantime it is advisable to send the Faqir of Ipi some military technicians to look after the making, the use and the servicing of the arms and the equipments, besides instructing the natives.[9]

In his recollections,[10] Pietro Quaroni devoted many pages to this problem. From the 1930s the Faqir of Ipi, a village located in North Waziristan, had started a guerrilla against the British. His force, about 3,000/4,000 tribesmen, were armed with rifles, a few machine guns and some antiquated cannons. The Faqir needed modern arms and money; the Italian minister along with his First Secretary Enrico Anzilotti decided to contact the Faqir in order to exploit him for Italy's purpose: it was a reciprocal exchange. The Faqir accepted the offer of arms and money for his fight against the British; as for Quaroni he could benefit of the unrest created among the tribes by keeping British troops engaged along the border instead of being sent to Africa against the Italian army. In June 1941 Anzilotti, disguised as a Pathan tribesman, went to Gorwekht, the Faqir's headquarter, to discuss the modes of their co-operation; eventually money and arms were sent from the

German legation in Kabul because the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was too slow to help the Faqir. In his book *The Indian Struggle 1920-1942*, Bose reported what was Quaroni's thought in February 1941:

> If in June 1940, that is at the time when the defeat of England seemed certain, we had a ready organization like the one Bose proposes now, it could have been attempted to liberate India, and it might have been possible. Politically and militarily India is the cornerstone of the British Empire. Last year's chance is gone, but a similar one could come this year also; one should be ready to take full advantage of it [...]. Our enemies, in all their wars, the present one included, have always largely used the "revolution" weapon with success: why should we not learn from our enemies? Two things are necessary to make revolutions: men and money. We do not have the men to start a revolution in India, but luck as put them in our hands; no matter how difficult Germany's and our monetary situation is, the money that this movement requires is certainly not lacking. It is only a question of valuing the pros and cons and to decide on the risk.[11]

However, as reported in 1943, Quaroni himself had already realized during the summer of 1941 that the Axis plans to use the Faqir of Ipi were a waste of time and money. He gave four reasons why it became impossible to start a general revolt on the Frontier by using the Faqir after the outbreak of the Russo-German war:

> a) the Faqir's authority was too circumscribed.
> b) even with unlimited supplies of arms the Faqir could not gather more than 10,000 adherents.
> c) he and his men would be useless outside their mountain fastness.
> d) the Faqir relied on arms which could no longer be supplied by land after Hitler had attacked Russia whence previously arms could have been smuggled as "factory machinery".[12]

As regards the idea of sending warplanes to the Faqir, Quaroni believed that it had been technically feasible since Italy possessed at the time long-distance planes which could have taken off from their base at Rhodes. However, this idea had been rejected by the Faqir on the ground that planes would attract the attention of the British, who might bomb his headquarters and all the surrounding villages.

At the beginning of 1942, when general Rommel with his "Afrika Korps" was advancing towards Egypt, the British secretary of state for India, L. S. Amery promised India "full and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth", but after the war. On 6th February, from Kabul Quaroni informed Ciano that it was the right time for the tripartite powers to take a stand in favour of the Indian problem. The minister underlined that the British propaganda was insisting on the fact that Japan was protecting the Hindus who, in their turn, will oppress the Muslims; he added that the Muslims of the frontier tribes were terribly worried. He concluded that it was necessary to take a stand in the matter. One month after, on 5th March, Quaroni asked Ciano to make some propaganda in favour of Bose, similar to the German propaganda from radio Berlin.

Of great interest is the probable last long report of Quaroni to Mussolini, who had resumed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after Ciano's destitution on 5th February: it is dated 9th June 1943, a few weeks before the Allied Forces' attack to Sicily and Mussolini's fall. Quaroni explained that it was against the Italian interests to make propaganda in favour of the unity of all parties in India, just like the Germans and the English were doing, though in different ways. The interest of Italy was to adopt a policy favourable to the Muslims and supporting their claims for an independent state of Pakistan: the Indian Muslims did not want to be liberated of the British to fall into the hands of the Hindus. In conclusion, the minister advised not to

follow the German propaganda against Jinnah and to remain neutral in the matter.[13]

Iqbal Shedai was considered by the top-level people of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs their most useful agent because of his long staying in Europe and because he was a Muslim, both qualities being important for all the problems concerning India and the Middle East. Both Bose and Shedai agreed on the necessity of a three-party declaration of India's independence: but only Mussolini was in favour of it, Hitler and Ciano were against it. Alessandrini, however, insisted on his support to Shedai:

> [...] we thought and still think that Bose's support to the cause of India is [...] personal. Mr. Shedai has made interesting considerations I agree upon. This does not mean that Mr. Bose is not to be considered and that our co-operation with him is to be changed; but it is Mr. Shedai our reference, above all because he is a Muslim.
>
> Though the Germans have given Mr. Bose all possible facilities, they share our point of view. He is an intelligent man who, with his "Forward Bloc", has succeeded in abandoning Gandhi's negative policy, which is harmful and producing the opposite effect. However, in a near future, Bose might be the man to apply for the new accomplishments of the Axis in India. Waiting for that moment, I am sure that people more courageous and more practical like Shedai are of immediate use today.[14]

Alessandrini underlined the fact that Shedai was "a Muslim". This fact explains the contrast between Shedai and Bose in Europe. It is true that the programme of the two men had a common goal: the independence of India; however, their rivalry was harmful for the Indian cause. Besides, they chose to work independently: Bose in Germany, Shedai in Italy. Throughout the war, Bose worked with the Germans and later on with the Japanese, Shedai with the Italians, and only in a few occasions their roads met.

Summing up, the requests of Bose and Shedai were three: a) diplomatic recognition; b) broadcasting radio messages into India; c) the creation of an Indian army.

Diplomatic recognition: this was the most controversial point. Neither Germany nor Italy were really interested in India's future: Germany because India belonged to the political and commercial sphere of Italian interests; Italy because India was supposed to be in the future a part of her colonial programme, a sort of an extension of the Italian colonial empire after the defeat of Britain. However, a diplomatic recognition depended only on the military operations (in 1941 the German advance to the Caucasus, in 1943 the Japanese march towards India). Only in 1943 did Bose succeed in getting an official recognition from Japan and from the Italian Social Republic;[15] in February Germany got rid of him by accepting his request to join the Japanese after the fall of the former British colonies of Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. Thus Bose was able to create in south-east Asia a large army made up of Indian prisoners-of-war, willing to join his ranks, in order to support the Japanese advance. On the occasion he received diplomatic recognition, but it was too late. This problem of the recognition was mentioned many times by Galeazzo Ciano in his diary:

> June 6, 1941. I receive Bose, head of the Indian insurgent movement. He would like the Axis to make a declaration on the independence of India, but in Berlin his proposals have been received with a great deal of reserve. Nor must we be compromised, especially because the value of this youngster is not clear. Past experience has given rather modest results.

April 14, 1942. The Japanese have proposed a tripartite declaration on the independence of India and Arabia. First reactions in Berlin are unfavourable. The Japanese initiative is not welcome in regions close to Europe. Mussolini on the other hand, wanted to adhere to the proposal immediately.

May 4, 1942. I receive Bose, had of the Hindu Nationalists. He feels badly when he learns that the declaration in favour of independence for India has been postponed *sine die*. He believes that in this way we are playing the game of Japan, which will act on its own account without considering the interests of the Axis. He now thinks that British domination in India is coming to an end. British forces are small and the Indian forces have no desire to fight. Naturally, we must take these declarations of Bose for what they are, because he is trying to turn the water to his mill.

May 5, 1942. I go with Bose to the Duce. A long conference without any new developments, except the fact that Mussolini allowed himself to be persuaded by the arguments adduced by Bose to obtain a tripartite declaration in favour of Indian independence. He has telegraphed the Germans proposing – contrary to the Salzburg decisions – proceeding at once with the declaration. I feel that Hitler will not agree to it very willingly.[16]

In fact Hitler did not agree. In his *Diary* Joseph Goebbels wrote on 11th May:

> We do not like this idea very much, since we do not think the time has yet come for such a political manoeuvre. It does appear though that the Japanese are very eager for some such step. However, émigré governments must not live too long in a vacuum. Unless they have some actuality to support them, they only exist in the realm of theory.

The Germans were not even interested in emphasizing Bose's role; two months before, on 1st March, Goebbels had written:

> We have succeeded in prevailing upon the Indian Nationalist leader, Bose, to issue an imposing declaration of war against England. It will be published most prominently in the German press and commented upon. In that way we shall

now begin our official fight on behalf of India, even though we do not as yet admit it openly.

Radio broadcasting: this was possible, both for Bose from Berlin and for Shedai from Rome. Though this kind of propaganda was quite useful, its success was limited: the illiterate masses were excluded from these facilities; besides, in many regions there was a serious shortage of food, particularly in Bengal, Malabar, Bijapur, Orissa, where about two million people died of hunger in 1943-44, and under these conditions people were interested only in their survival.

Indian army: in the beginning, the parallel efforts of Bose and Shedai were not fruitful. Both of them created an Indian legion with Indian soldiers captured in Africa by the Germans and by the Italians: these legions were of no practical use. The German legion consisted of only 3,000 people, who were sent to France, in the Bordeaux area, in the last months of the war; from there they retreated to the camp of Oberhofen, near Colmar, in Alsace, and later after to Italy, along the Gothic line, where they captured by the French Allied forces in April. The Italian legion, about 2,000 people, created in April 1942, mutinied and was disbanded in November.

On the contrary, a great importance had the Indian National Army (INA) created by Bose in south-east Asia. This force of about 30,000 people was fully armed by the Japanese and placed under the absolute control of Bose, who could also dispose of a larger part of the Indian population living there. In the summer of 1944 the Japanese were finally ready to begin their invasion of India: they attacked from Burma hoping to capture Imphal, on the Indian border, from where to prolong their march to Delhi. The INA issued and used (so it is stated) their own stamps with the inscriptions "Arz-i hukumat-i Azad Hind" and "Chalo Delhi", meaning that the march would end at Delhi (earlier,

in March 1942, the Andaman and Nicobar islands, in the Bay of Bengal, had been occupied by the Japanese). Unfortunately, the attack to Imphal failed; furthermore, the war in the Pacific was going very badly for the Japanese, who had to move their air power from Burma to the Pacific theatre. The morale of the INA troops broke down; Bose was practically abandoned by his ally and the Ina was left to its destiny.

For sake of information, we must mention the activity in Japan of a forerunner of Bose, Raja Mahendra Pratap,[17] a strange personality, a sort of prophet and visionary, who during the Second World War lived in Tokyo and started or wanted to organize the Indians living in the south-east of Asia. He was very soon replaced by Chandra Bose: he remained famous for a message he addressed to Mussolini in 1942, a message full of praise but rhetoric and too vague.

Let us go back to Berlin meeting. Besides the conversations of German and Italian representatives in Berlin with Bose and Shedai, a special meeting was called to examine the situation in Afghanistan, which was strictly connected with the Indian problems. It was attended by Ghulam Siddiq Khan, former Minister of foreign affairs of king Amanullah,[18] who reported that Afghanistan was ready to rebel against Britain and to start a guerrilla at the frontiers with India. The author of the report, Alessandrini, was doubtful about this; however, he was hopeful only in case the army of the Axis could reach the Caucasus in the next Spring [1942]. He wrote that the armed intervention of Japan and the Japanese march towards the Indian sub-continent would be decisive for the Axis' attitude regarding Amanullah, who "at the right time can be recognized as the new king of Afghanistan and the new head of that Muslim state of the Middle East which the Afghans have been longing for long and which we want strictly connected to our Muslim colonial system".[19]

The anti-British propaganda from the clandestine radio of Rome, named "Himalaya" after the title of the first poem by Allama Iqbal in his first book in Urdu, *Bang-i Dara* [The Call of the Caravan], was the most active and the most followed in India so as to make the British government of India worried: however they were not able to locate it. They thought it was located in the area of Waziristan, at the borders of India, because its broadcastings were clearly heard. In a book of memoirs Pietro Quaroni, then minister in Kabul, wrote that he was sceptical when he was told of a radio broadcasting in Hindustani from the Himalaya: after an inquiry, he was informed by Filippo Anfuso, then Ciano's first private secretary, that the radio broadcast from Rome:

> The broadcasting was technically perfect: I have never understood how was it possible to have a clear programme from Radio Rome, which generally arrived faint and with breaks. The speaker was of first rate: he was able to mix politics and propaganda along with lewd jokes appreciated by Indians and Afghans. He was varied, pleasant, and practical: his programs had become one of the daily events in Kabul's life, which did not offer much diversion and people gathered to listen to them.[20]

For Quaroni, Italian ambassador in France from February 1947, the mystery about the speaker remained such until 1948 when, the war over, he received a phone call during a meeting of the United Nations in Paris: it came from a member of the delegation of Pakistan, who said to him in a broken Italian:

> "I am so and so".
> "...?"
> "Don't you recognize me?".
> "Truly, I don't".
> "Right, you can't know: I am Radio Himalaya".

Only today, after many years, are we able to identify

that gentleman whose name the Ambassador, a perfect diplomat, did not want to reveal in his memoirs.[21]

In spite of the fact that Shedai's radio propaganda had been highly appreciated by the fascist government, the rivalries between Italians and Germans posed many problems to Shedai. The relations between Shedai and Bose had never been good, but the two had to collaborate while in Europe. In October 1942, because of pressures from Germany under Bose's input, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to stop the propaganda from radio Himalaya: probably Bose was angry for the refusal to him to speak from that radio, probably the Germans were worried of the Italian success, or most probably there have been contrasts between the Italians and the Germans in the recruitment of Indian prisoners-of-war in Africa. It seems, in fact, that Bose had not been given by the Italian Government permission to go to Libya while Shedai was there.

Shedai accepted the imposition but asked either for another job or for leave: the Germans and the Japanese were eager to use him for their propaganda. Fortunately, early 1943 Bose left for south-east Asia, and Shedai could resume his broadcast. However, in order not to emphasize the Muslim character of radio Himalaya, as in the past, Shedai underlined its non-confessional attitude, irrespective of any religion:

> Radio Himalaya has resumed its broadcast to India after a silence of three and a half months. You know that radio Himalaya, for 98 per cent, addresses to the Indian peasants and workers and that our religion is the full independence of India. Our faith is serving India and our position in front of the communities is: neither Jew, nor Christian, nor Zoroastrian, nor Muslim.[22]

Actually Shedai's propaganda was helpful more to Muslim Indians than to the cause of the independence of

India. It filled the void left by the Congress during the three-year period of internment of its leaders[23] and gave the Muslim League the possibility of becoming the true representative of the Indian Muslims. Between 1942 and 1945 the members of the Muslim League reached two millions and the dream of an independent Pakistan was near to come true.

More efficacious was Bose's propaganda in the absence of the active presence of Gandhi and Nehru who had been interned. He was helped by the Italian press who spread the conviction that the struggle between Gandhi's India and Britain was at its most crucial moment. In fact, on 9th August 1942, with a radio-message Bose insisted on the fact that the international situation was favourable to the success of the Indian independence since the military and political situation for the British in Africa was bad and after the liberation of Egypt there would inevitably follow the freedom of India. Hence his countrymen should take advantage of this particular moment and support the effort of the Axis. Then he insisted on the fact that India had been involved in the conflict without the consent of her people and that the non-violent civil disobedience was unable to fulfil its goal which was possible to get only through arms. A week after, on 15th August, Bose spoke again on the radio: he emphasized the riots after the internment of the Congress' leaders, the failure of the Atlantic Charter which did not apply to India, the sympathy towards India's struggle in the world press, the support to her cause by the Indians living abroad, concluding with the appeal to create the most possible damage to the British in India and to invite all the parties, such as the Mahasabha, the Muslim League and the Akali, to join for a common effort.

After Mussolini's fall on 25th July 1943 and the events after 8th September, Shedai left for the north: in Rome there was nothing more to do for him, who ran the risk of being

taken by the British. However, in the north the situation was very critical: Shedai recreated in Milano the "Society of Friends of India" and resumed his work of propaganda.

On 26th March 1944 the "Corrispondenza Repubblicana" published an unsigned article *L'India agli Indiani* [India to the Indians]; it was written by Mussolini himself on the occasion of the advance of the Japanese and Indian troops from Burma to the eastern frontiers of India. He wrote:

> The event which can have a great effect on the course of the war and can produce unforeseeable developments in the world history has taken place. The indefaticable and heroic armies of Japan, along with the Indian troops of Chandra Bose have crossed the Indian border [...]. This event had been waited for since Chandra Bose, after leaving Europe, had reached Burma in a mysterious voyage and had assembled there the first troops of the Indian National Army [...] The door of India could not be opened from the inside through a popular revolt as the Anglo-American troops would have easily crushed them or from the outside by Chandra Bose's weak Indian National Army: the help of Japan was needed [...]. The wheel of destiny is running. In this war full of unforeseen and unforeseeable events, after the Pacific phase, the Indian phase has started. No need to say that the Italians of the Social Republic, and probably the Ialians beyond the Garigliano, follow with deep sympathy the march of the liberating Indian troops, which are, *de jure et de facto*, along with the Axis armies.[24]

Actually the article did not speak much of India's freedom, but dealt with the religious and linguistic situation in the sub-continent; only in the end did Mussolini hope in a victory of the Japanese without adding anything might influence the Italian situation.

On the occasion, Shedai sent to Mussolini a letter of congratulations and thanks, signing it "Your Indian revolutionary pupil". It was apparently the last contact:

Shedai remained to the side of the Italian Social Republic until April 1945.

After the independence of the sub-continent Shedai returned to Pakistan.[25] In spite of the opposition from Ghulam Muhammad, then Minister of Finance, and Iskandar Mirza linked to the intelligence services, who were after him because of his progressive ideas, Shedai was included in the Kashmir Delegation led by the Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan. After cease-fire was declared in December 1948, Shedai went home living in Karachi where he continued his free-lance work concerning the World Muslim Association of Pakistan in Lahore. In the Fifties he decided to go back to Italy where he is reported to have taught Urdu language at the Is.M.E.O., University of Turin, from 1957 to 1964, and to have worked after the project of building a mosque and creating an Islamic Cultural Centre in Rome with the help of the Agha Khan (the would-be president), the Egyptian Government, and the Holy See.[26]

In 1964 Shedai returned to Pakistan, living the last ten years of his life in the house of a maternal nephew, 'Abd ul-Rahman Bhutta. He died on 13th January 1974.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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[1] Virginia Vacca, *"Ar-Radyo". Le radio arabe d'Europa e d'Oriente e le loro pubblicazioni*, in "Oriente Moderno", Roma, XX, N.9, settembre 1940, pp.444-451.
[2] In "Asiatica" Roma, VIII, N.2, marzo-aprile 1942, p.90-94.
[3] Ibidem, pp.95-97.
[4] "The Vice-Director General for the Transoceanic Affairs, Alessandrini, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ciano. Note dated Rome, 31 December 1941", in *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Roma, IX serie 1939-1943, vol.VIII, 1988, p.86-92.
[5] The full document in Italian has been published by R. De Felice, quoted, pp. 335-340.
[6] Subhas Chandra Bose, *Crossroads*, London, Asia Publishing House, 1962, pp.174-177.

[7] Quoted by Manfredo Martelli, *L'India e il Fascismo*, Roma, Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, 2002, p.181.

[8] The Faqir of Ipi, alias Mirza 'Ali Khan (1892/97-1960), was strongly anti-British; after the partition he became the symbol of independent Pakhtunistan.

[9] See note 5, p.337.

[10] P. Quaroni, *Il mondo di un ambasciatore*, quoted, pp.120-128.

[11] Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian struggle 1920-1942*, Calcutta, 1964, pp.415-418.

[12] Milan Hauner, *One Man against the Empire. The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve of and during the Second World War*, in "Journal of Contemporary History", vol.16, N.1, January 1981, pp.183-212.

[13] *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Roma, IX serie 1939-1943. vol.VIII, 1988, pp.266-267, 374, 457-458, 536-540.

[14] Ibidem, pp.91-92.

[15] . Mussolini recognized it on 1st November 1943: "The fascist republican government recognizes the Government of president Subhas Chandra Bose and sends the best wishes for his mission against the British imperialism", in "Corriere della Sera", 2 novembre 1943, now in *Opera Omnia*, quoted, vol.XXXII, p.215.

[16] *The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943*. The complete, unabridged diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936-1943, edited by Hugh Gibson. Introduction by Sumner Welles, New York, Doubleday & Company, 1946, pp.363, 473, 481-482.

[17] Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886-1979), journalist and writer, established a Government of Free India at Kabul in 1915. After along staying in Japan, he returned to India in 1946.

[18] Amanullah Khan (1892-1960), first independent king of Afghanistan (1919-1929), was deposed because he was considered a too radical reformer; he introduced Pashtu as national language, limited the influence of the mullahs, promulgated a constitution and created a national assembly (*jirga*). He went into exile to Italy and afterwards to Switzerland where he died.

[19] *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Roma, IX serie 1939-1943, vol.VIII, 1988, pp.90-91.

[20] P. Quaroni, *Il mondo di un ambasciatore*, quoted, pp.149-155.

[21] . Ibidem, p.155.

[22] It seems strange he had not mentioned "nor Hindu".

[23] Gandhi, Nehru, and all the eleven members of the Executive Committee of the Congress were interned from 9th August 1942 to 15th June 1945: without their active presence in the life of the Country the

problems of India became worse, both from the point of view of the interior order and of the economic situation.

[24] *L'India agli Indiani*, in "Corrispondenza Repubblicana", 26 marzo 1944; now in *Opera Omnia*, quoted, vol.XXXII, pp-329-331. One month before his fall, in his last speech, the so-called "speech of the bagnasciuga" [wind and water line], he had mentioned: "Chandra Bose, who is not fasting, is at the gates of India". Was it only a passing idea or was he really hoping in some help impossible to take place? See *Opera Omnia*, vol.XXXI, p.196.

[25] Vittore Querèl, *"Mi alleerei con il diavolo per la libertà degli arabi". È quel che ha detto in Africa il grande agitatore musulmano Shedai*, in "La Patria", Milano, 29 dicembre 1952, p.3.

[26] There exist a bunch of letters exchanged between Shedai and the Agha Khan in the year 1950 dealing with contacts between Shedai and the Holy See, mentioning Cardinal Eugène Tisserant (then Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Church) and Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini (the future Pope Paul VI). Documents attached to 'Awan Ahmad Gulzar's History Thesis (see Bibliography).

CHAPTER VIII
THE ROLE OF FASCIST DIPLOMACY IN THE CREATION OF PAKISTAN

In the years before the Second World War the Italian diplomat Gino Scarpa had always been working for an *entente cordiale* between the Italian Government and the Indian nationalists such as Gandhi, Nehru, Bose, and other prominent Hindu figures. The result of his efforts did not produce much for many reasons: in particular Italy was cautious in her support of Indian nationalism because she did not want to break with Britain.

After Fascism came to power the Italian relations with Britain were cordial: the state visit of king George V and queen Mary to Rome, in May 1923, was a success for the Country and for Mussolini in particular. According to Sir Ronald Graham, the British Ambassador, it had fostered the ties between the two nations which had been generally good in spite of some misunderstandings in the past.

Unfortunately this situation did not last for long: the first shocking episode was the bombing of Corfu and the occupation of the island at the end of August 1923, after the murder of the Italian general Enrico Tellini, who was working with an international commission in-charged of the establishing the borders between Greece and Albania.

However, the situation cleared up and until the conquest of Abissinia the relations between the two countries became better. The African affair was an

unfortunate problem; actually both France and England, who were aware of what was boiling in the pot, gave Mussolini the impression of having free-hand in the affair. Probably this was the truth; in January 1935, in Rome, the French minister of foreign affairs Pierre Laval gave Mussolini a free-hand in East Africa both on economic and military levels; the same was the British attitude - in December 1925 an agreement had been reached between Mussolini and the then British Foreign minister Sir Austen Chamberlain. At the end of June 1935 the English government changed its attitude after realizing that the public opinion was against any modification of the status quo and in support of the Society of Nations.

Mussolini went on with the invasion of Abissinia on 3rd October and Italy was declared aggressor by the Society of Nations.

After the conquest, Mussolini tried a reapproaching with the British government, who was slow to understand the new situation in Europe: in March 1936 Hitler had militarized the Rhineland, but the Baldwin government refused to help the French to expel the German troops and even to consider sanctions against Germany. This was the last occasion to avoid the future World War Two since at that time Hitler was weak and a Franco-British intervention could have restrained Hitler from further expansion; of course the German success in the Rhineland made the Nazi party more popular.

November 1936 was the beginning of the end: Italy, Germany and Japan signed a three-party agreement, which was officially meant to stop the spreading of communism, but actually it was anti-British according to Ciano's diaries.

Let us now concentrate with the role played by Iqbal Shedai and Pietro Quaroni in the Pakistan affair. The two men, who never met each other, worked in an independent

manner according to their capacities: Shedai as a patriot devoted to the cause of India, Quaroni as a diplomat placed in Kabul, then as today an important crossroad in the Middle East.

Actually Shedai's work for the creation of Pakistan was important, if not fundamental, from the point of view of the propaganda. He had always been in favour of a separate state for the Indian Muslims: his contrasts with Bose were not only religious, but political also. He had always thought that Britain's apparently favour towards the Muslims was typical of the British policy: *divide et impera*. By supporting the Muslims, Britain intended to use them against the Hindu majority, thus continuing their ruling India as long as possible. Hence Britain's favour towards the Muslims was only apparent; in fact, after the 1857-58 Mutiny, the Indian Muslims had been neglected by the British who considered them with suspicion for the role they had performed during the revolt. Shedai worked on these lines while in Italy: he tried to remind the fascist authorities that all the Muslims would be the scale needle in the future world after the war, and if Italy supported them, they would remember her help for ever. In his reports to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in his broadcasts he always favoured the Muslim cause, even though he did not appear to do so, hiding this idea under a general propaganda in favour of India as a whole. Words such as "If you go on fighting each other, you will be defeated and will remain slaves until the day of judgement" were made to create unity, but actually indicated a temporary unity to expel the British and to settle the internal problem afterwards. Actually Italy was more than Germany in favour of the Indian Muslims: Hitler, who had met Bose only once, on 26th May 1942, on the occasion of Bose's asking him leave to return to Asia, was against any propaganda in favour of Pakistan because he did not want to give up the support of the radical Hindu nationalists and

to create further enmities in India. Renato Prunas, Director General to the Transoceanic Affairs, who had received this news directly from Ribbentrop, informed Quaroni on this German attitude towards the Muslim League and the Pakistan question on 27th May 1943; in a long dispatch on 9th June Quaroni faced with great insight the whole problem:

> German policy does not take into consideration the changes occurred in India in the last four years. The action of the Congress directed to unify the India communities irrespective of religious differences through common race and traditions against England has failed[...]. For the Hindu masses the political consequences have been partly neutralized by Gandhi's "guru" attitude; but among the Muslim masses it has provoked a religious reaction the result of which is Pakistan. [...] In 1939 the Muslim League could be considered a baseless party of capitalists and landlords, a party of leaders without followers, just like the Liberal party and the Hindu Mahasabha. If today the Muslim League has become indisputable a mass party it is due to the idea of Pakistan. If at Berlin they could read any League newspapers, they would not have any doubts about the religious base of Pakistan: still two years ago, if one asked a tribesman who Jinnah and the Muslim League were nobody knew; today everybody knows they are those who are fighting so that the Muslims could live in India according to their religious law. [...] Whether you like it or not, today Pakistan must be considered not a theory to fight against but a fact to be accepted as such.[...] It might perhaps make them [the Muslims] join the Hindus in the struggle against the English domination, provided the Hindus accept the idea of Pakistan. To compel them to fight today for the creation of a majority Hindu state in India under whose law they would be compelled to live is the same thing as to compel the Hungarians to fight in favour of Rumania or the Germans in favour of Czechoslovakia.
>
> What I have said is of course referred to the Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab and some nearby zones

with Muslim majority; for other separate Muslim zones such as Bengal the problem is more complex. [...]
It would be convenient for the Germans not to cherish false illusions about the efficacy of their propaganda. Don't let them think that preaching the Muslims unity can be useful; they have been doing it for three and a half years and the result is a reinforcement of the League. Generally speaking, our propaganda is efficacious only when it is according to the needs of the Indian public opinion. [...]
Another point on which at Berlin they should have clear ideas is this: even if a Hindu-Muslim unity takes place, this does not mean that the result is the independence of India or an Indian revolution. Provided a full agreement takes place between Gandhi and Jinnah, the British might say that there remain outside the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. Ambedkhar [representing the Untouchables], or some princes, in order to say that there is no unanimity among the Indian parties.
During his staying in Kabul, Bose told me that the day a foreign army entered India, the country would revolt. I doubt it: what is sure is that, until the English and the Americans maintain their troops and materials, an Indian revolution is out of question. [...]
In my view our attitude towards the Indian Muslims should be dictated by our attitude towards the Muslims of the Near East. The Muslim world, in Afghanistan and in India, is seriously worried of the destiny of the Muslims in front of the Anglo-American imperialism and the Jewish policy on one side and the Hindu threat which they suppose linked to the Anglo-American imperialism on the other side. If it is thought that it is useful for our war to play on the religious element of the Arabs, it is necessary to adopt also the same attitude towards the Indian Muslims and their Pakistan by advising the Congress to surrender to their request. It is an impossible task to excite the national religious sentiment of the Arabs against the Anglo-Saxons and the Jews on one side and to advise, on the other side, the Indian Muslims to remain in a Hindu-majority State and to join a non-religious party. There are many people here and in India who compare what we are saying to the Arabs and the Indians: the

> outcome is that we are non logical and, still worse, that we are not honest. [...] For example, I consider it impolitic the violent and personal attacks to Jinnah made every now and then by the German propaganda: we do not do it and it is good not to do it.[1]

Without saying it openly, Quaroni was in favour of the policy of the Indian Muslims to have a territory of their own: the problem of an India divided or united was not faced at that time. Actually, Allama Iqbal himself had not clarified his request supported at Allahabad on 29th December 1930. We do not know whether he visualised an independent and sovereign State or a State within an Indian Federation. Before speaking of a separate territory for the Muslims, Iqbal clarified two essential points: one, "if the principle that the Indian Muslim is entitled to full and free development on the lines of his own culture and tradition in his own Indian home-lands is recognised as the basis of a permanent communal settlement, he will be ready to stake his all for the freedom of India"; two, "The units of Indian society are not territorial as in European countries. India is a continent of human groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and professing different religions. Their behaviour is not at all determined by a common race-consciouness. Even the Hindus do not form a homogeneous group. The principle of European democracy cannot be applied to India without recognising the fact of communal groups". In view of these two points, he said that "the Muslim demand for the creation of a Muslim India within India is, therefore, perfectly justified" and went on specifying his demand:

> I would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State. Self-government within the British Empire or without the British Empire, the formation of a consolidated North-West Indian Muslim State appears to me to be the final destiny of the Muslims, at least of North-West India. [...]

> The idea need not alarm the Hindus or the British. India is the greatest Muslim country in the world. The life of Islam as a cultural force in this country very largely depends on its centralisation in a specific territory.[2]

The last two sentences were and are generally omitted when quoting Iqbal's statements; and yet these words, whih were passed over at that time, are important in understanding Iqbal's mind and thought. Probably the Hindus' and the British's fears were originated by the word "State" for the western region of India; but it was necessary because a number of provinces were to be welded into one.

Iqbal's Presidential Address was extremely important because he dealt with the problem in details. He was not concerned with partition, which was in 1930 an idea beyond the imagination; he thought in terms of federation and federal states, i. e. of a Muslim India within India. In fact, in the same chapter, he clarified the importance of a unitary block in north-western India:

> This centralisation of the most living portion of the Muslims of India, whose military and police service has, notwithstanding unfair treatment from the British, made the British rule possible in this country, will eventually solve the problem of India as well as of Asia. It will intensify their sense of responsibility and deepen their patriotic feeling. Thus, possessing full opportunity of development within the body politic of India, the North-West Indian Muslims will prove the best defenders of India against a foreign invasion, be that invasion th one of ideas or of bayonets. The Punjab with 56 per cent Muslim population supplies 54 per cent of the total combatant troops in the Indian Army, and if the 19,000 Gurkhas recruited from the independent State of Nepal are excluded, the Punjab contingent amounts to 62 per cent of the whole Indian Army. This percentage does not take into account nearly 6,000 combatants supplied to the Indian Army by the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan.[3]

As we can see, the word "Pakistan" was not put forward because it did not exist in 1930: the name was coined in 1932 or 1933 by a group of Indian Muslim students, at Cambridge University, under the guidance of Chaudhri Rahmat 'Ali who circulated a four-page leaflet advocating for Pakistan, a word with a double meaning. From a political point of view it was an acrostic made with letters of the territories to be included, namely *P* for Punjab, *A* for the area of the Afghan North-West Frontier, *K* for Kashmir [which was a Muslim majority native State], *S* for Sind, and *TAN* from the last letters of Baluchistan; from a literal point of view it meant "The Land of the Pure", i. e. *Pak i-stan* (*stan* = land, and *pak* = pure).

It was this the name used by Shedai in his long report to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in early 1942, under the heading "Che cosa è il Pakistan?" [What is Pakistan?].[4] However, Shedai who was a very clever and intelligent agit-prop did not use this word in his propaganda: he spoke mainly in favour of India's independence, paying his tribute equally to the members of the National Congress and the Muslim League, to Gandhi, Nehru, Bose, Azad, Jinnah and Liyaqat 'Ali Khan. He acted in this way because he did not want to alarm his Italian allies and upset his countrymen, since many Muslims were in favour of the Congress such as the "Red Shirts" of Khan 'Abd ul-Ghaffar Khan: the Afghan borderland was a critical area which was a field of great importance for the Waziris, the Faqir of Ypi, the Italian Legation in Kabul, and in a certain way for the Germans, too. Another particular topic of Shedai's radio propaganda was his criticism of the Indian social system of casts; his leitmotiv was: "We preach only India's freedom, we want the freedom of our Country, we consider Jinnah as the leader of one hundred million Muslims. We consider, and will always consider Gandhi and Jinnah as friends. Only then will India be near her freedom.

Until the Hindus do not consider as brothers the one hundred million Muslims, the dream of our freeedom is only a dream. How is it possible to have fraternity if untouchability is not removed?" This was more or less the attitude of radio Himalaya, which tried to explain that Pakistan was not the creation of the Muslims or of the British, but of the Hindus themselves, who oppressed their Muslim brothers, thus pushing them towards the creation of an independent state of their own; it was indeed a clever way to present the Muslim instances.

Quaroni's ideas were in agreement with Shedai's, but for a different consideration. He thought that both the German and the Japanese propagandas in favour of Bose's program was wrong, because "it gave the Muslims the impression that we are in favour of what they do not want, that is the creation of an India in which they are a minority"; in conclusion Quaroni advised his Ministry not to do anything which supported this "impression" and above all not to speak against Jinnah's program, as the German allies were doing.

The theory of individed India or of two independent States came under discussion in September 1944 during some long meetings between Gandhi and Jinnah: however, the talks reached a dead-point, among futile discussions of legal and constitutional cavils. The fundamental contrast was at the basis of the whole problem: for Jinnah the Muslims of India were a nation, for Gandhi a community.[5]

On 9th September 1943 Italy signed the armistice: the work of Pietro Quaroni in Kabul had ended suddenly. The Italian Legation remained loyal to the king, who had formed a new government at Brindisi. In April 1944 Pietro Quaroni was appointed Italian Ambassador to Moscow.

Notes and References

[1] *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, Roma, IX serie 1939-1943, vol.VIII, 1988, pp.536-540.

[2] Quoted from *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal*, quoted, pp.3-29.

[3] Ibidem.

[4] See Appendix III.

[5] In a letter to Jinnah, dated on 15th September 1944, and published in "The Hindu" of 29th September, Gandhi wrote: "I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam, it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children". *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, vol.84 (27 January 1944-10 October 1944), pp.381-384.

APPENDICES
Appendix I

A short history of the "Hindustan Ghadar Party" (Indian Revolutionary Party), written in Italian by Iqbal Shedai [Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma, Gab. Min. (1923-43) B. 1059 fasc. "Gadar Party"]. It is dated 19th May 1937.

The Ghadar Party is not a recently formed party; it was founded in fact in the middle of 19th century after the British conquest of Delhi, the old capital of India.

The leaders of the movement were the Maharani of Jhansi, prince Nana Farnavis and others under the patronage of the last emperor of the Mughul House. In 1856 the Party co-operated in the revolt against the British, but vainly because this revolution, known under the name of the Great Mutiny, was drowned in blood; hence the creation of the Indian Empire.

The repression of the British was very strong, particularly against the Muslims irrespective of the fact they had taken part in the mutiny, though its leaders were Hindus.

The Indian princes submitted to the British in the hope of preserving their realms; all the same was the attitude of the degenerated Hindu aristocracy, while the masses were kept quiet through the help of religious leaders who sold themselves to the colonial authorities.

This period of the political sleep of India lasted until the beginning of 20th century, i.e. for about fifty years.

In 1907 there was a reawakening with a revolutionary movement extended only to the Punjab and the Bengal: it shook the British Empire but it was repressed ruthlessly. Some of their leaders escaped abroad.

In 1914, at the beginning of world war one, some of these leaders who had taken shelter in the USA decided to act and shifted the seat of the Ghadar Party to San Francisco.

The leaders of the revived party were two great revolutionary men: the late Maulana Barakatullah (a great friend of Italy) and Har Dayal.

At that time there were in America about 20,000 Indian workers and peasants, all of them joining the movement.

The Party started its work by sending secret agents to India and to all the Countries where Indians lived: most of these agents were Sikhs and Muslims; however some Hindu intellectuals joined the movement, too.

Some months after the break of the world war the German government started relations with the leaders of the Party through its diplomats in the USA, especially through its military attaché in Washington, [Franz] von Papen. However, these contacts were too late because all the ways to enter India were strictly controlled by the British, who were well aware of the danger coming from that side. In spite of this, a load of weapons was sent to India by sea with the assistance of some leaders of the Ghadar Party. This load was stopped near Singapore and some leaders were prosecuted and hanged by the British authorities.

Another steamer, the Kama-gata-maru, with about 1,000 political refugees, reached India, but they were put under arrest and their leaders were prosecuted and jailed to life in

the Andaman isles: some of them are still here, others escaped or were pardoned.

The German government asked the Ghadar Party to send a delegation to Afghanistan in order to persuade Habibullah Khan, Amanullah's father, to attack India in the north. The Ghadar Party sent its vice-president Barakatullah to Germany and Turkey: this mission reached Kabul in 1916 under the direction of the German officer [Werner Otto] von Hentig. However this mission had neither money nor weapons to offer Amir Habibullah, who was under the influence of the Intelligence Service, who had provided the Amir with gifts, money and some English girls to take care of him. Thus the mission was detained as a hostage in Kabul until 1918.

The Germans were defeated in the whole of the East: India, Afghanistan, and Persia: India did not move in their favour. The Germans are to be blamed for their failure because they did not care to start propaganda in India in advance and to awake these countries suffering under British yoke.

No need to speak further of these facts which should be a warning for the future. The leaders of the Ghadar Party in the USA, Canada and other allied countries were prosecuted ruthlessly: some were jailed, others deported to India, others escaped to neutral countries, but most of the members of the Party remained in California where they resumed their activities.

In early 1922 the Soviet government contacted the Ghadar Party: two of their leaders went to Moscow but, because of intrigues by the Indian communist M. N. Roy, could not sign any pacts and left Moscow in the second week of February, leaving me there to go on with the proceedings. I too could not conclude anything with the Comintern and left a few months later. After this failure,

the Party decided to try with Italy and ordered me to go to Rome, where I arrived on 10th June 1923 (Dr Enderle, who has known me since that date, is aware of my activity to obtain an Italian-Indian co-operation).

In 1926 the British government sent Indian troops to Shanghai, Canton, etc. and the Chinese Government asked our Party to help them; also the USSR government asked our Party for specialists in revolutionary propaganda among Anglo-Indian troops, urging them not to fight against the Chinese. Our party sent to Nanking three prominent people at the disposal of that government: as our Party had already had a strong centre at Shanghai, our work was made easy by the fact that the Anglo-Indian troops in China had been recruited among the Sikhs and the Muslims of the Punjab, two areas where our party had worked previously. In two months our propaganda bore its fruits, as the Indian soldiers refused to fight against the Chinese. Some leaders of this military movement were prosecuted by the British authorities: some of them were shot, others were condemned to long term imprisonment, but the British government was compelled to send the Indian troops back to India. In this way China was saved by the three members of the Ghadar Party (two of them were with me in Paris). I offered also to send one of the two to Addis Ababa to incite the British garrison to rebel, but this proposal was refused!

The British government realised the danger of the Ghadar Party and decided to suppress it: in 1930 they allocated 3,000,000 rupees to destroy it (1 rupee = 8 lire; 24 million lire!). From 1926 the relations between the Ghadar Party and the USSR government became very good; but in 1935, on the occasion of his visit to Moscow, Mr Eden informed Litvinoff that no co-operation between Britain and USSR was possible until the Comintern helped and encouraged the Ghadar Party.

The Soviet government, who had realised the strength

of our Party in the Chinese affair, was hesitant to break with us; however, their relations with the Ghadar Party became colder.

For years, I myself had been informing my Party that we could not rely upon the government of the USSR because they were exploiting us for their own purposes.

Thus I was ordered to strike up friendship with personalities of the Italian government following my activity to show that Italy and Britain would become strong enemies. I informed my superiors in reports which I have given to my Italian friends, too. I have always thought, I think and will think that only Italy could be a natural ally of India: because of its geographical position Russia is a too dangerous neighbour of our Country!

For these considerations and according to the orders I have received from the Headquarters of my Party, I have put myself to the service of a co-operation between Italy and India. My Italian friends can testify it.

During the war between Italy and Abyssinia the Ghadar Party printed and sent to India thousands of leaflets ordering the Indian troops to refuse to fight outside India and to be ready only to defend the Indian internal territory (see copies of these leaflets which have been handed over to Comm. Jacomoni previously).

This fact was discussed in the Indian Parliament and some members (who sold themselves to the enemy) proposed to suppress the Ghadar Party by any means. For further details see the reports of the Indian Chamber published in India in 1935-36.

A friend of ours succeeded in printing in Italy 2,000 copies of these leaflets which were sent to India under letter-forms from neutral countries.

This is a summary of the activities of our Party outside

India; inside India the Ghadar Party is unable to work under its name because it has been declared illegal. This is why in India our party has been given a new name: Kirty Kisan Party, the Workers' and Peasants' Party. This new name has been used from 1922, but after being declared illegal in 1934-35 the Party was renamed Hindu Socialist Party. We have been strongly prosecuted and hundreds of our members are still in jail: however, our work goes on.

In the beginning our party, the Ghadar Socialist Party, was not represented in the Pan-Indian Congress, but when the British oppression became stronger we decided to join the Indian National Congress adopting the name of Congress Socialist Party and working under its President, Jawaharlal Nehru. However, Nehru's advisers and his personal secretary belong to our party.

From the above report it is clear that our Ghadar Party is the most important revolutionary party in India (data about it can be derived from the book of the British General MacMunn, Tempête sur l'Inde. Les activités secrèts et l'Intelligence Service aux Indes depuis la guerre mondiale, Paris, Payot, 1936, written by one of the heads of the Intelligence Service).

In conclusion:

The leaders of the Hindustan Ghadar Party think that if Italy is defeated by Britain it will be a disaster for the eastern peoples and in particular for India herself. For this reason the Ghadar Party wishes to have sincere and cordial relations with Italy.

The Ghadar Party will never be the agent or the instrument of a foreign country: it has been such.

It works only in the interest of India and of her friends, whoever they are.

It is a nationalistic party: in case it comes to power, it

will organize India on the corporative principles, as they have been enunciated by the Duce.

Appendix II

A draft for India. Translated from "Schema di lavoro per l'India" [Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma, Gab. Min. (1923-43) B.6 fasc.406]. No date, but April 1941.

England is converting India into a large base of operations against the Axis in the Mediterranean, in Africa, and in the East. India is becoming the principal supplier of war material for these sectors. The British under-secretary for India, Mr Amery, declared these days that, in order to face the military power of the Axis, India is to supply from ten to twenty million soldiers. The British government intends to obtain them from the Indian provincial governments through a compulsory conscription.

It is therefore necessary and urgent to prepare a plan of military-political action to make India as ineffectual as possible for the British purposes and to contribute to the fall of the British power in India. This would provoke the complete victory of the Axis and the end of the war. It is advisable to make preparations in Italy in order to profit in the future: if this work is made by the other member of the Axis, the profits will go to it. This work is urgent: otherwise it is the other member who will get the future profits.

In the political field we must oppose the British domination in India: therefore we must intensify the propaganda, reinforce the Indian revolutionary parties, help their unification and the partisans of of non-violence who are presently helping the British.

In the military-revolutionary field, waiting for direct

military operations against India, we must favour their opposition to conscription of Indian troops, intensify and widen the struggle of the frontier tribes against the Britih, create violent guerrilla and terroristic actions in India in order to block the British administration, sabotage the war production, help the political and revolutionary parties.

In short, the main points are the following:

In the political field

1. Propaganda. It can be carried out almost exclusively through radio, as already started. It is necessary to deal with other forms: workers' disturbances, terroristic and guerrilla actions in India to block the war production and prevent the supplies from India to the forces fighting against the Axis. We must give radio-instructions for the organization of strikes and terrorist attacks against war industries, railways, means of communications, British officers; and for the manufacture of guerrilla weapons and explosive material, etc.

2. It is necessary to create in Italy an Indian nationalist-revolutionary committee made up of the best Indian representatives, to be radio announced to India.

3. Later on, we must set up an Indian nationalist-revolutionary government. However, it is not the right time for this because the possibility of proclaiming the independence of India is not near: such a government would be considered a puppet in the hands of the Axis and would provoke the reaction of the Indian national parties, who would support Britain against a government created here. An Indian recognized government in Italy will be useful when the military operations reach the East. However, it is convenient for the Axis, or for Italy, to make some press or official declarations in favour of the national aspirations of India.

In the political-revolutionary field.

1. The anti-British guerrilla of the tribes of the Indo-Afghan frontier is to be extended to all the tribes in addition to the tribes of Waziristan. In such a case the number of the fighters would be larger: the frontier tribes rely on 250,000 fighters, who would engage 100,000 anglo-indian soldiers. Besides, the extension of the war-front along the frontier will encourage the political movement and the development of the internal revolutionary movement in India. To react this goal it is necessary to give the Faqir of Ipi more financial resources to extend his action to all the tribes concerned.

It is necessary also to send technical equipments, such as radio sets to connect the various tribes and the Faqir of Ipi with this place [Italy], along with code-books, binoculars, materials to make explosives and bombs, machine-guns, anti-aircraft weapons, etc; materials to be sent partly now and partly after we have occupied a territory (Syria and Iraq) situated at such a distance from the Indo-Afghan frontier as to deliver them by planes.

In the meantime it is advisable to send the Faqir of Ipi some military technicians to look after the making, the use and the servicing of the arms and the equipments, besides instructing the natives.

2. To employ Indian prisoners. All the Indian prisoners in Northern Africa and somewhere else are to be sent to Italy. The best elements among them will be chosen and instructed politically (by the Indian revolutionaries present here) and technically and militarily to be sent by submarines or planes to India and to the tribe frontiers in the capacity of political agents, directors, technical instructors of revolutionary actions. For this purpose we can set up a sort of school for the political and military-revolutionary preparation of the Indian prisoners. These agents will be sent to India along with the weapons (see next point 4).

When the number of these prisoners-of-war is sufficient, an army and air force will be formed so as to be employed on the fronts where the English employ Indian troops.

3. Propaganda among the Indian troops sent against the Axis forces. We must provoke their rebellion and desertion. Propaganda it to be carried on through leaflets and pamphlets, in the language and words according to religion and place of origin: this material will be compiled by the Indians present in Italy and will be printed and distributed by the War Ministry (mainly by planes).

It will be necessary to promise a fair treatment to the Indians who take side with us (advancements and special recompenses to non-commissioned officers and to officers who desert along with their troops) and to keep them informed of the military and political situation. I think that the Indian troops in North Africa are not aware of the recent events in North Africa and in the Balkans.

4. Weapons to be sent to India. This is the most important problem from the revolutionary point of view. The doctrine of non-violence has been accepted in India mainly because the population does not have weapons to use. If enough weapons are sent to India, as the Irish of America did for Ireland, it would be possible to develop a revolutionary movement and a guerrilla so as to make England loose the control of India and cannot use India as a military base for the defence of her Empire in Africa and in the East.

These weapons can be sent as soon as we have the control of the coasts of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (secret shipment by submarines or corsar ships) and when we occupy countries from where to send the arms to India by planes. A sufficient number of Indian agents must be ready to accompany the sea and air consignments (revolutionary paratroopers to special Indian areas).

The weapons must be suitable for guerrilla and terrorist actions, that is light machine-guns, pistols and machine-pistols, silencers for pistols and guns, time bombs, explosives, small radio-sets, etc. It is advisable to use weapons compatible with munitions available locally. This material is to be collected as soon as possible and to be sent there.

It is also advisable to create links between our organization in Italy and the Indian revolutionaries through clandestine radio-sets to send them our directions and to receive military and political information about India.

Funds for India and neighbouring Countries.

We can buy gold sterlings in Syria either through the "Banco di Roma" which has large quantities of money in local currency or buy directly sterling and French francs. We can dispose of Indian banknotes (rupees), printing them here; they are necessary for the work of frontier tribes and in India.

Expenses are to be borne by the military bodies. The whole work under discussion is to be carried on by the military bodies, except the radio propaganda.

General Staff Colonel Giovanni Tavazzani, who knows problems and persons in India and is in contact with people of the Indian nationalistic and revolutionary movement, should be employed as military adviser for India and the Middle East and liaison-officer for the military bodies to co-operate with our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and should carry on with the work as per this draft.

Appendix III

A note from the Vice-Director General for the Transoceanic affairs, Adolfo Alessandrini, to the Foreign Minister, Ciano. Translated from "Appunto. Il Vice Direttore Generale degli Affari Transoceanici, Alessandrini, al Ministro degli Esteri, Ciano" [Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma, I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, IX Serie, 1939-43, vol.VIII, Roma, 1988, pp.86-92]. It is dated 31st December 1941.

Secret.

Following an invitation of the German Government, there have been taken in Berlin conversations on questions concerning India and the Countries of Middle East. They have been organized by the Consul General Wüster, Director General of the "Information Abteilung" of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the direction of the State Secretary Keppler. The attendants were many officers of the "Auswärtiges Amt", two representatives of the German Supreme Command, Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan, and Mr Iqbal Shedai. Besides our representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was a high officer of the SIM.

Before the conversations there took place a meeting reserved only to Italian and German representatives concerning clarifications on our points of view. An almost complete agreement was reached on all the problems. This was due to the preliminary organization by the Cabinet and the Direction General of Transoceanic Affairs and by the

German Embassy in Rome. The Berlin conversations were the result of our work and our co-operation on the matter.

In the conversations on Indian questions here are the problems under examination:

1. Creation of offices. The creation in Italy of a special office under the supervision of the DGAT [Direction General Transoceanic Affairs], comprising representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the SIM [Information Military Service], of the Ministry of Popular Culture, and a group of Indian agents under the order of Mr Iqbal Shedai. The task of this office is to examine all the problems concerning India and the Countries of the Middle East.

On the German side, the creation of an "India Office" made up of only Indian agents under the order of Mr Bose. In the future this Office might be transformed and recognized as a mission of "Free India" in Germany. Mr Bose insisted on this personal rcognition but the German counterpart decided to delay any decision on the occasion of the declaration of India's independence. I have not made any declaration on the matter. Our "India Office" is only Italian: Mr Shedai is considered a technical member. When Berlin recognizes Mr Bose as a "Representative" of India, we will give the same recognizition to Mr Shedai, who has been for years a faithful and loyal friend, whose work has been very precious. Mr Shedai is a Muslim and we are interested in having in Rome a Muslim representative of the future India.

2. Propaganda. I reported the propaganda work which we started a year ago. I underlined that the best results were obtained in the field of radio broadcasting service, official and pirate: in particular the pirate programs of Mr Shedai, supported with information from our Minister in Kabul [Pietro Quaroni], have provoked great reactions in India. Though they have some doubts, the British

authorities have been unable to locate this radio; they think that it is located in the Waziristan.

During the conversations the German and Indian representatives have praised our broadcasts. The German representatives have decided to follow our example: they will send to Rome some technicians to get information about our services.

I have also informed them of the contacts which had enabled our Minister in Kabul to carry on with another type of propaganda through the diffusion of pamphlets and leaflets sent there from Italy.

Herr Wüster informed us that, in addition to broadcasts and general propaganda papers, their "India Office" will publish a sheet of Indian news which is going to become a newspaper in hindustani and in English. It will be distributed in the largest possible way, in so far as the present difficulties of communications allow it.

3. Indian Legion. The representative of the O.K.W. [Oberkommando der Wehrmacht] declared they are studying the creation of an Indian Legion made up of prisoners who will be selected and re-educated. This re-education will be done in Germany by English-speaking German officers supported by Indian officers selected among the prisoners. These troops will not be destined as a military support but will be a means of propaganda. The will be equipped with special weapons not usually upplied to the general infantry; however, for the time being it will not be possible to organize more than a battalion: more units will be organized when the number of prisoners increases. This Legion will be destined to the future front on the Caucasus.

I expressed our desire to organize a legion to be employed on the Libyan front, but Mr Bose opposed saying that the Indian soldiers will fight more willingly if they are

moving towards their Country. With the German support I insisted and it has been decided to send to Northern Africa some elements instead of a detachment.

A representative of the German Information Service described a program of sabotage activity, dropping of paratroopers, sending of agents, etc.

I informed them of our contacts with the Faqir of Ipi, underlying the good impression we had of him, his programs and his activity. I recommended to send him some tangible demonstration of our appreciation and some aids. The Faqir said he is able to create a special air-field for the Axis aircrafts.

Both the Germans and the Indians admitted that the territory under the Faqir's control can be a very good "Stutzpunkt" [backing-point] for future military operations and dropping of propaganda material.

4. Declaration of Indian Independence. The problem of the declaration of Indian independence was the most important point of the conversations. The main and convincing speaker was Mr Bose. He said that the best support of the Axis to the Indian cause is an official, public and solemn declaration of the Axis governments stating to make India a free and independent State in the near future. He added that the British propaganda plays a very good game and is successful with the Indian masses by saying that Germany and Italy are advancing to India not to free her but to subjugate her and in more ruthless way. This opinion is making its way deeply. his doubt exists also in the minds of the Indian patriots living abroad, who try to work for the victory of the Axis. Only a contrary and solemn declaration of the Axis is able to clear these doubts and prevent any possibility for our Armed Forces to be faced with a united India at the orders of London, well-determined to fight till the end.

Also Mr Shedai expressed the same point of view and reminded us that it is a danger if Britain can dispose of the Indian riches and of the large number of the Indian population.

The Secretary Herr Keppler answered saying he realized the importance and the validity of the opinions expressed by the Indian friends, but the decisions of the upper spheres was to postpone the declaration of the Indian independence to a more favourable time. Many reasons of general and particular character advise it. The Axis Powers - added Dr Keppler - do not wish to follow the British example of announcing previous and groundless declarations in favour of any Countries and peoples. These promises will be made only when the Axis Powers are sure of being able to maintain their promises and to give a practical aid.

The example of the untimely revolt in Iraq, which might have been more important, teaches not to speed up situations which are not actually mature. Dr Keppler added that the decision of postponing the declaration of the Indian independence was taken by the Duce and the Führer during their latest meeting.

On my part I expressed the same point of view of Dr Keppler.

Mr Bose and Mr Shedai objected by saying that a new very important fact has modified the situation in these days, the sudden entrance of Japan into war, their important successful military operations and their armies reaching the Indian borders.

In the words of Mr Bose and Mr Shedai there was a particular and strong worry about Japan's intentions to India. There is no doubt that, if the Indians are worried about the real intentions of the Axis to them, they are more worried about the intentions of Japan to India. As a proof of our sincerity, the Indian representatives asked for a

declaration of the Axis in favour of India, valid also from Japan's side.

Dr Keppler recognized the Indian worries, even though he did not mention the dangers coming from Japan. However he admitted that the present situation is completely different from the one existing at the time when the Duce and the Führer decided to postpone the declaration, and promised to submit the question to the Führer. I associated with him and promised to submit the same question to our Minister of Foreign Affairs [Ciano].

At the end of the discussion concerning the declaration of the independence I suggested that in the meantime, waiting for a re-examination of the whole problem and for instructions from the upper spheres, in order to overcome the present silence of the Axis powers, we might give instructions to the press and the radio of our two Countries to show a sincere interest to the Indian independence; in fact, an increasing propaganda in favour of India might counterbalance the British propaganda. The German and Indian representatives approved of this proposal to be sumitted the Minister von Ribbentrop. I had the impression that Minister von Ribbentrop approved of it and gave instructions to the German press; in fact, German and Italian newspapers started publishing news about India and articles in favour of the cause of Indian independence.

The meeting closed with the decision to inform the Embassies of Japan in Berlin and in Rome of our work, asking them to let us have their considerations and to submit to their Government the problem of the declaration of independence.

According to this decision, back from Berlin, without entering into details, I informed the Counsellor of the Embassy of Japan, Mr Ando, who was interested in the work we have done and promised to inform Tokyo by telegraph.

No answer has yet arrived from the Japanese governmnt, but the Japanese telegraph agencies have published news of Indian meetings in Tokyo and Shanghai sponsored by the Japanese authorities and of Indian and Burmese committees who made appeals for the independence of their Countries.

These Japanese initiatives worried the German government who has now realized the necessity to go on for an official declaration of the Axis in favour of India and the Countries of the Middle East without any further delay. On 30th instant [January 1942] Minister von Ribbentrop presided over a meeting to examine the problem.

5. Situation in Afghanistan. A special session was called to examine the situation in Afghanistan. Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan, former Foreign Minister of king Amanullah, an intelligent and able person, appreciated by the Germans, declared that the Afghan nation is ready to rebel to the British and to start a guerrilla warfare in the Country and at the Indian borders, in spite of the anglophile attitude of the Prime Minister and the Government, who have been influenced by the rupees distributed by the Delhi Government. However, he added that the British have allowed the Afghan government to keep the two Axis Legations in Kabul in order to give the impression that the Country is independent, while it is not so. It is a work of appeasement which the Delhi Government is doing through bribes and intrigues. Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan thinks that, if the Axis Countries closed their Legations saying openly that Afghanistan had lost her indipendence and that the King and the Government are London's instruments, and that a real independence will be given by the Axis, the Afghans will fight against the hated British.

This proposal is, no doubt, interesting and intelligent; but will the Country rise up - as Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan - and in what extension and measure?

It is doubtful that the Afghan people will rise up only because of the closure of the two Axis Legations. Perhaps a real revolt will take place only in case of an Anglo-Russian invasion of the Country; but, in the eventuality of this occasion, the present Government, though bribed by Englih money, might opposed and move to the mountains, guiding a guerrilla.

Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan excludes the above mentioned possibility; even if he is right, the proposed closure of the two Missions seems unsufficient to create a violent popular reaction. On the other side, the two Legations are nowadays extremely useful because they give us information and distribute propaganda material, without which we would know nothing of the Indian situation. Finally, we think that Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan is urged by the personal desire to obtain the Axis' public recognition King Amanullah and he himself had been waiting for years.

In conclusion, we think that the problem should be examined with the utmost care and that we should wait for the development of further events, particularly of military nature. If the Axis forces reach the Caucasus next Spring and if the Afghan people show clear signs of revolt, we might accept Mr Ghulam Siddiq Khan's suggestions. I said all this during the meeting and the German representatives agreed with me.

We have however decided to look after the situation in Afghanistan with the greatest attention and to intervene at the right time.

The Afghan problem cannot be separated from the Indian problem: they are strictly linked together. If the entry of Japan into war and the advance of the Japanese troops produce a new stand of the Axis about the Indian problem, a declaration in favour of Afghanistan will not be delayed. King Amanullah, whom we have been helped for years and

who is a good card in our hands, might be recognized by us as King of Afghanistan and Head of the Muslim State of the Middle East the Afghans have been dreaming for years, a State we must link to our colonial-muslim system.

6. Some considerations about Mr Bose. Mr Bose, who left India and reached Europe only through our help, had perhaps felt that Rome hd not given him sufficient consideration. Actually, we have been very open and kind to him, but we had thought and still think that his support to the cause of India is only personal. Mr Shedai informed me of many facts I fully agree upon.

This does not mean that Mr Bose is not to be considered important and that our co-operation with him is not to be continued. However, our reference is to Mr Shedai, particularly because he is Muslim.

The Germans have for Mr Bose the same consideration we have for him, though they have given him money, houses and cars. He is surely an intelligent man; with his Forward Bloc within the Indian Congress he succeeded in abandoning Gandhi's negative policy, detrimental and harmful to us. Maybe, in the future, he will be able to follow our pattern in India. However, waiting for those times, I am sure that men more practical and resolute, such as Mr Shedai, are of immediate help.

It is my duty to point out the great interest of the Germans for the subject dealt with in the meeting. They underlined the fact that the agenda and the discussions had been made in Rome, and had shown a great interest in the problems of the Middle East, asking for a closer co-operation.

Therefore a full examination of the problems, the decisions we reached at, and the Berlin discussions have been very useful.

Appendix IV

What is Pakistan?, written in Italian by Iqbal Shedai [Archivio Storico Ministero Affari Esteri, Roma, Gab. Min. (1923-43), busta 725 (Gab. 408)]. No date, but 1942.

The word "Pakistan" has been heard in Europe in the recent two-three years, but people ask what it is. Is it something new from India or is it one of the usual English creations? Somebody might ask information about the name and the why of this new political idea. Let us start with the name, which is new though its content is very old.

From a political point of view Pakistan means the creation of an autonomous state as a federal unity in the Federation of India, but with a very great autonomy on the affairs concerning the population of a given region. Which is this region? It is explained by the word "Pakistan". Pakistan means: Punjab (P), Kashmir (K), Sind (S), Beluchistan (TAN), that is an autonomous government comprising a large territory with a population of about 45 million inhabitants, 70% of them Muslims. Why do then the Muslims ask for a particular autonomy?

The answer needs a general panorama of the historical and political conditions in India, and in particular of the various movements to reach the freedom of the Country.

The present population of India is about 300 million people out of which 90 million are Muslims: the majority is Hindus, about 280 million people, the rest being Jains, Sikhs, Christians, Parsees, etc. There appears that the two larger groups are the Hindus and the Muslims.

The Mughal Empire in India lasted three centuries; though the ruler was Muslim, the empire was practically a secular state. It was never a secular state and was not governed by the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (hadith): see the Akbar-namah by Abul Fazl, and Ibn Hasan, The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire (Oxford, 1936). In 16th century Akbar tried to unite the two largest groups of the population by giving the Hindus the highest responsibilities in the government. Hindus were the governors and the army commanders in the most difficult areas of the empire, though as in Afghanistan the population was Muslim and under Mongol domination. After Akbar's death this experiment failed for two reasons: first, the military incapacity of the Hindus; second, the old Brahman caste influenced the Hindu society, particularly in the south (this idea of a society divided into castes opposed the equality principles of Islam creating a struggle between the two systems).

At the beginning of 18th century the Mughal empire entered a period of decadence: this is the reason of the extension of the British influence in many parts of India, principally in the south and the east. In 1757, in the battle of Plassey, the British conquered a large part of the Bengal, but the rebellion in Mysore, led by a Muslim prince, Hyder 'Ali, prevented a further British expansion. Hyder 'Ali intended to stop the decadence of the Mughal empire because he thought that a strong Mughal empire was a guarantee of freedom for the whole of India. Besides, the Mughal state, situated in the north and with the military support of the Muslim population, was able to face any warlike enterprise. Finally, no military support would come from the Hindus, who were very able in production and commerce but unable in the military field because of the cast system, which has always prevented a unitary effort against the enemies.

Hyder 'Ali fought two battles against the British. He wounded but not killed the English snake; being unable to throw the British out of India, Hyder 'Ali allied with the Hindu princes, but - as always - the British gold and the policy of the "divide et impera" prevented him to fulfil his intention. His son and successor, Tipu Sultan, continued his task by making an alliance with France.

Before the opening of the Suez Canal, the traffic between Europe and India was conveyed through the Mediterranean; Tipu understood that "la tranquillité de l'Inde dépend souvent d'un coup de canon tiré dans la Méditerranée ou dans l'Océan" (Histoire des Progrès et de la Chute de l'Empire de Mysore, Paris, 1801, tome I, p.122). As he realized he could not get any support from India, Tipu looked at foreign countries, in particular at France who had some establishments along the southern coast of India. Hence, he sent a three-member delegation to the court of Louis XVI in Paris: it was received publicly by the King of France on 3rd August 1788, but when they "ils demandaient des secours contre les anglais, le Government français ne put leur donner que des spectacles et des fêtes" (p.139). It is clear why Louis XVI could not give any support: France was going towards a revolution and it was not possible to be engaged in far away places. However, when Napoleon was in power and went to Egypt in 1798, he wrote a letter to Tipu Sultan promising help, but it was too late. Besides, Napoleon could not fulfil his promise because he was defeated by the British fleet at Abukir.

Tipu died fighting: his fall was the last flame, but it is a significant episode of the Indian history. This makes us think that the only community able to work for the freedom of India is the Muslim one. History has confirmed it in other cases.

Let us make a brief digression about the character of the Muslims.

The Muslim mentality is practical and attached to facts. For centuries the Muslims got experience in the arts of government and political alliances, and of problems of peace and war. On the other side, the Hindu mentality is idealistic: the world has no realty, it is only apparent and the only realty is the immanent Supreme Being which manifests himself in all the visible things of the material world. The Hindu lacks a good moral system: there is no clear line between the moral and the immoral. The absence of political and social necessities for the society derives from the lack of a clear moral concept. No doubt, they accept a government, but as something to bear, not as a positive fact. The only aim of the Hindus' life is the liberation of soul from the chains of the body, that is to say that the final aim is the dissolution of the union between soul and body as soon as possible. No need to go into details with the Brahman and Buddhist doctrines and conclude that the Hindus lack a clear political and social ideal.

Let us go back to history. After Tipu's death, the centre of activity moved to the north, where the population had always been majority Muslim and the Indo-Islamic culture had left deep marks in usages, customs e beliefs of those populations.

At the end of 18th century, when the East India Company extended to the Bengal, the Muslims were very deeply influenced by Hindu customs and ideas. Thus the Muslims thought that the very first step was to give up all non-Islamic elements so as to create a completely new religious and spiritual movement.

This movement was known as "Wahhabi" after the name of 'Abd ul-Wahhab, the great reformer of the 18th century; the leader of this movement was Syed Ahmed from Rai Bareilly in north India [Oudh]. In that period the Punjab was under the Sikh power, which was appreciated by the population because it was potentially able to throw the

British out of India: the Punjab, governed by Ranjit Singh, was majority Muslim.

The Muslims tolerated his government. However, during the last years of his reign, due to some whims, he started some actions against his Muslim subjects. This inflamed the feelings of the Wahhabis, but pleased the British: the Wahhabi leader was killed in battle in 1831. The Sikh power declined and in the span of twenty years the British were able to conquer the whole of the Punjab.

The idea of Syed Ahmed was to create a small Muslim state in north Punjab, where the Muslims could live and practice their religion freely.

In the meantime the British were victorious and plundered the country: this led to a new campaign against them. This time it was started by the prime minister of the Peshwa dynasty, Faizullah Khan, from Cawnpore. The British had cut off the pension to the last Maratha ruler, Baji Rao II [1796-1818], refusing to recognize the adopted son [Nana Sahib], a custom officially accepted by the British. In 1849 Faizullah Khan went to England to support his case before the Queen unsuccessfully: he travelled through France (probably through Italy, too) and went also to Russia to look for help (John W. Kaye & H. Malleson, The Indian Mutiny, London, W.H.Allen, 1888-89, 6 vols).

Back to India he [Faizullah Khan] organized a secret movement which contributed to the famous Mutiny in 1857: the aim was the same, i.e. to create in the north a small [Muslim] state to oppose the British conquest, but the task was too big. He might have succeeded if it had not been for the betrayal of the Sikh and Hindu princes who were under the influence of the British policy of "divide et impera".

In the period following the Mutiny the Muslims were subjected to persecutions: important families were

dismembered and the Muslim culture suffered a lot. However, the Muslim community decided to study the western culture so as to be able to have their part in modern life.

Another event modified the British attitude towards the Muslims. Russia moved to the borders of her empire: in 1866 they held Bukhara, Khiva, Samarqand. In 1864 the Prime Minister, Prince Gourichkof, published a memorandum, justifying the Russian advance in the interest of civilization. This paper alarmed the British government: after 1870 the British policy towards India changed, particularly towards the Muslims.

The foundation of a Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at 'Aligarh in 1875, the creation of Municipalities [1882] to give more powers to the Indians, the setting-up of an Indian National Congress in 1885, were the result of the Russian danger and of the British policy of appeasement. The Muslims accepted them, but they did not forget their ideal [of freedom] and thei past sufferings. They were only waiting for the right moment: it is not possible to understand the history of India in the second half of 19th century without considering the Russian expansion in Central Asia (H.G. Rawlinson, Central Asia, London, no date). The last quarter of 19th century and the first decade of 20th century are a period of Muslim recovery and of an attempt to be inserted in some world political currents.

Which were the main events?

About 1919 Britain tried to settle a base in Hijaz under the pretext to create a hospital for Indian pilgrims. The Muslims realized the danger and protested violently: hence the project was abandoned.

During the First World War many Indian leaders were jailed; as soon as war ended, the Muslims joined the non-Co-operation movement in 1920-21 showing their weight in the

world policy.

Some problems regarding the Indian Muslims compelled the State Secretary for India, Samuel Montague, to resign in March 1922, and the Prime Minister Lloyd George six months later. From 1911 to 1930 the Muslims tried to compromise with the Hindus in order to speed up the freedom of the country; but, except the short period 1920-21 when the non-Co-operation movement was in Muslim hands and Gandhi appreciated it, the understanding disappeared because of petty "religious" problems, such as the cutting of sacred trees or the killing of cows which were important in the Hindus' eyes. From 1923 to 1932 an annual Conference for unity has taken place, but under some pretexts they failed because of the orthodox Hindus.

Because of this "political" experience the Muslims were compelled to think of themselves and of a limited area of their own where to live free and develop according to modern discoveries, following in particular the pattern of Italy and Germany.

The necessity of a small independent territory is obvious: the aspiration to "Pakistan" which is a new name for an old idea.

Will it be successful? This is the question. And what will the British attitude be? If we look back at the history of India, we can see that in last 150 years the Muslims failed. Why? Did they lack capacities? What guarantees do we have for the future? The lesson of history takes us to a different conclusion.

There have been nations which suffered under the tyranny of a foreign power: they could not get freedom from oppression only when the oppressor became weak or the oppressed nation found an ally to create a new equilibrium between herself and the oppressor.

See the example of Italy who found her independence by creating an equilibrium in her alliance with France against her oppressor, Austria, in 1860. Some of the Balkan states became free after the Berlin Congress of 1878, where many powers intervened in their favour. The war for the Greek independence was fought with the help of Britain and Italy: the battle of Navarrino in 1827, where the Ottoman fleet was destroyed.

The rise of new powers always creates new equilibriums of forces: the oppressed nation finds her liberty or at least a better position.

The rise of Japan in the East and of Italy and Germany in Europe, particularly Italy which is nearer to India than any other powers, is a guarantee of a new equilibrium.

Lets us now face the question of Italy and India. The opening of the Suez Canal coincided with the formation of the Italian unity. This is a fact of great importance in considering the relations between European and India. The Suez Canal presents a double aspect: one regards the action of the Indian people to Europe, the other the action of Europe to India - a phenomenon of mutual action and reaction.

It has been proved for example, that the Crimean war was won by Britain with French and Italian help, but when the danger reached Constantinople in 1877, Lord Beaconsfield called Indian troops to Cyprus. This shows that, in her European affairs, Britain depends more on her colonies than on Europe.

However the opening of the Suez Canal helped the penetration of new ideas into India and the Far East and created contacts between the peoples of the East and France, Italy, and Germany (Valzeben, L'Angleterre et l'Inde, Paris, 1875, tome II).

We have seen how Tipu Sultan asked for help from France for the freedom of India. Today, France has ceased to play her old role of freedom, equality, brotherhood: that century is definitely over and is only a chapter of history. Italy has taken her place in the Mediterranean and in the eastern affairs: she is in a better position than France because she is in the middle of the Mediterranean and nearer to the East. Besides, for her long and rich history Italy is more able to understand the oriental mentality, particularly Muslim, of the Mediterranean and outside it. After all, the movement towards East started from Italy with the sea republics of Venice, Genoa, Amalfi, who had contacts with the Islamic world: those populations still keep their old traditions and their capacity of mutual understanding of the Eastern peoples.

What should the contacts of Italy in India be? in the advantage of both parts in view of a political balance in the world. Looking at the history of India we see that the only active community is the Muslim one, who is trying to create in the north-west part of India a Muslim state within the Indian Federation.

The British government favours this project and encourages the creation of Pakistan. However, a quick glance to the history of India shows that Britain is in favour of Pakistan apparently; she wants to get the support of the Muslims in order to defend her empire which is destined to disappear. And the Muslim leaders are well aware that there is no consistence behind her crocodile tears.

Italy should not take this British attitude seriously and should not condemn the idea of Pakistan according to the principle that the sympathetic attitude of the enemy is dangerous and Italy must oppose it in order to be in the opposite side.

Britain knows very well that the creation of a Muslim

state, though small, means the expulsion of the English from India within fifty years. This is proved by the political struggles of the last 150 years; the Muslims cannot deny their past history.

All the peoples against the formation of a Muslim state favour the British game; it is only a circumstance that Britain shows her sympathy for the movement of Pakistan.

Therefore, Italy should move forward and declare to the world that the future equilibrium of India, or much better of the near East, depends on the establishment of an independent Muslim state in India, free from the clutches of the British manufacturers and bankers. The Muslims are not people who forget the help received in difficult times. Tomorrow, when they are free, and they will be free, they will consider Italy a true friend of theirs.

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